

# Disability Now



CHANGING SOCIETY

The big week



Cold weather, hot fashion

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## TUC backs Bill of Rights

In a major step forward for employment rights, the Trades Union Congress has passed a motion calling on the general council to draw up and campaign for a bill of rights for disabled people.

The motion, proposed last month at the TUC Conference by the National Communications Union, recommended that the bill should include sections on how to enforce and secure positive discrimination in employment and career development, help in finding work and access to workplaces and public buildings.

The TUC's first step will be to discuss the motion at this month's Social Insurance and Industrial Welfare Committee meeting.

At the meeting, union representatives will discuss areas the bill should cover, said Janis Grant, assistant at the TUC Social Insurance and Industrial Welfare Department. They will also look into weaknesses in current disability legislation before sending out a draft of the bill to individual unions for their comments early next year.

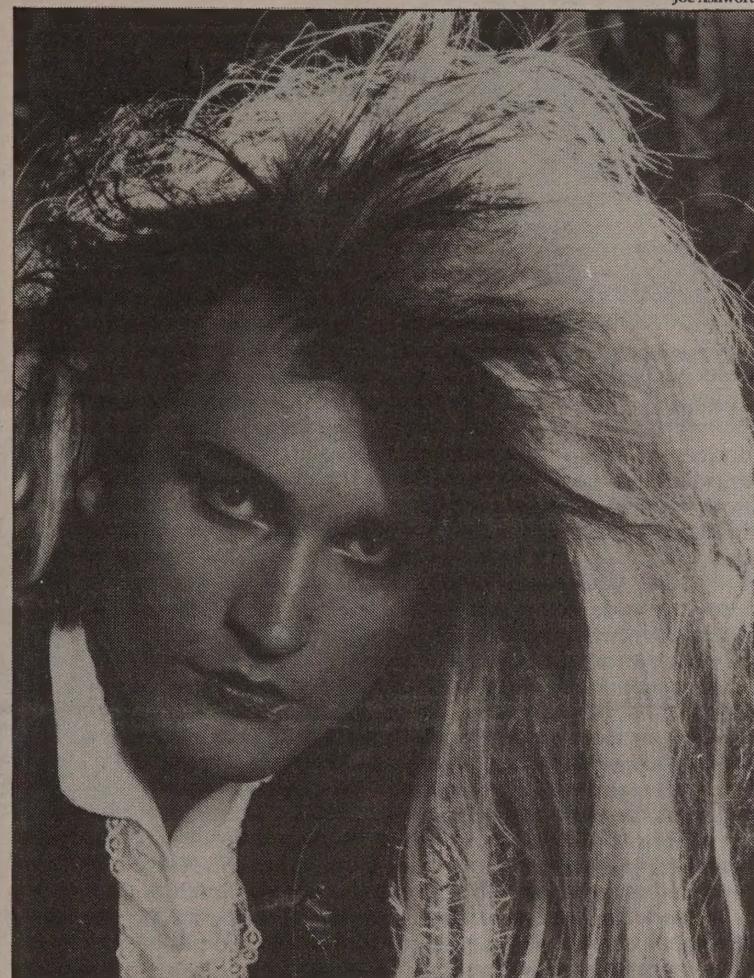
The bill will be prepared in consultation with the National League of the Blind and Disabled, seconders of the motion.

"The principle is admirable," said Bert Massey, assistant director of RADAR, "though I am not sure what position a 'bill of rights' would have within the British constitution. Perhaps 'Charter' would be more accurate."

He said that although several unions, such as the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union and NALGO had produced their own handbooks on disability rights, there were several areas, including the rights of people who become disabled while working, where greater union awareness would be welcome.

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Joe Ashworth

*Is he an actor? Is he a pop star? Not yet, but he's a pop singer who uses a wheelchair, and he has some strong words about fashion, music and disability – see page 11.*

## Minister says no to charities

Voluntary organisations came away from a meeting with Nicholas Scott, Minister for the Disabled, last month "confused and dismayed" at the Government's stand on the new income support scheme.

They say it will make it more difficult for some people who become severely disabled to live in the community after April 1988.

Seven organisations, including The Spastics Society, MENCAP, RADAR and the RNIB, had hoped that the Government would fully honour its pledge that severely disabled people would not lose out when the new income support scheme is introduced. Some newly disabled people and many leaving special education will not be eligible to receive the same level of cash support as now. As a result they could be up to £50 a week worse off, while many people will be £5 to £10 a week worse off than under the old scheme.

Those receiving benefit now will be protected from any loss in cash terms, but may have their benefit eroded by inflation.

Nicholas Scott responded to proposals put forward by the charities, but made it clear that

there would be no changes in the social security system to take account of severely disabled people in the near future.

He held out some hope that the level of benefits might be reconsidered and added that many disabled people would gain under the new system.

"I am confused and dismayed by this decision," said John Cox,

*continued on page 3*

## Questionnaire

How useful do you find *Disability Now*? What other subjects would you like to see in it? Would you be willing to pay for it?

These are some of the questions we are seeking answers to in the *Disability Now* questionnaire, inserted with this issue.

Please help us! If we don't know what our readers want, we can't supply it, and it is important that we receive your reply if we are to get an accurate picture of our whole readership.

If you find it difficult to fill in the questionnaire yourself, please ask a friend to help. Remember, no stamp is needed.

*New research from The Spastics Society*

## Disabled people face many barriers to voting

Disabled people face many problems which prevent them taking part as equals in an election, says a report published by The Spastics Society last month.

These include getting to the polling station, lack of access into the station and the polling booth, and marking the ballot paper.

Seventy people with a wide range of disabilities, including mental handicap, who live in residential units or in the community, were interviewed in 5 very different constituencies – North West Durham, Greenwich, Kingston upon Thames, Salford East and South West Surrey – during the 1987 general election campaign.

The aim was to explore the range of disabled people's views, problems and experiences as electors. A MORI poll conducted the month before the election found that 9 per cent of the public aged 18+ consider themselves disabled.

These are the main findings:

- Most of those interviewed in residential units were registered

*continued on page 3*

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# Letters to the Editor

Disability Now 12 Park Crescent London W1N 4EQ

## An open letter to John Cox . . .

Dear Sir John,  
You are doubtless aware of a recent headline on the front of *The Sun* newspaper (30 July) regarding some childish outburst from the children of Princess Anne and Mark Phillips. The banner headline that day shouted out to the millions of *Sun* readers "You Spastics".

In my eyes the event was rather fortuitous, albeit unintentionally so, and should be used as such.

It goes without saying that children, be they Royal or otherwise, have used the word "Spastic" as a term of abuse since the word first became used as descriptive of people having cerebral palsy. The Royal children were simply carrying on that tradition by referring abusively to the press corps as "Spastics", which led to the publication of *The Sun* story.

It is, of course, a moot point whether or not *The Sun*, with its gutter level line of communication, was reporting solely on the Royal children's outburst against the press. Or whether, by subtlety not normally connected with *The Sun*, they were using the headline "You Spastics", with the photos of two Royal children underneath, simply to abuse them in their turn.

The corollary of all this is really rather straightforward: the term "Spastic" remains a word used to insult and diminish.

I have two equally simple questions to put to you. Firstly, why do you allow your Society to continue to use a name that is insulting and abusive to those it is designed to help?

Secondly, why is it that almost none of your staff has cerebral palsy?

I hope that you will be able to answer openly to these 2 questions within the pages of this newspaper, as I am sure that you are as anxious as I am to see that people with cerebral palsy

should not only stop being constantly abused by means of language, but also stop being denied useful employment within your organisation and, indeed, to be elected onto your Board of Management.

**Rudi Breakwell Bos**

Director

Artsline

(*Rudi Breakwell Bos has, since writing this letter, left Artsline - Editor.*)

## ... and his reply

Dear Rudi,

Thank you for your letter.

To take your points one by one.

You should know that the Editor-in-Chief of *The Sun* came to see me to apologise profusely for the headline in his paper. He said it was hurtful, insensitive and he hoped that The Spastics Society and those with cerebral palsy would forgive his paper for this breach of good journalism.

You ask whether The Spastics Society will be changing its name.

First of all, I must remind you that I am the chief executive of the Society and it is the Executive Council who make policy.

Two years ago we ran a market research on the name. There was active debate on the subject during the afternoon session of the AGM that year. Strong feelings were expressed both for and against, and of course there are arguments for and against.

Above all, you may not know that there are 193 Spastics Societies in this country, autonomous and charities in their own right. They make up their minds what their names should be.

I am sure that there will be a rising tide on this subject and it is good that debate should continue.

On employment, I agree with you that there are not enough cp people employed by the Society. This is not to say that they are excluded. We must do better.

Finally, you ask whether there

are any cp people on the Board of Management. I take this to mean our Executive Council. Four out of 15 members have cp and 11 members on the Alpha Advisory Committee to the Council (all the members) have cerebral palsy.

**John Cox**

Director

The Spastics Society

A great deal of effort has been put into our work with the local authorities and voluntary organisations to improve our services. We now have a joint strategy for the adult with a mental handicap in Westminster. This has enabled many people to be moved out of long stay hospitals and provide better support for those already in the com-



How the Neater Eater works.

## Independent eating

I noticed a letter in Margaret Morgan's column (*DN, June*) from a woman having problems feeding herself because of atethosis.

I thought you might be interested in a device called the Neater Eater which I invented and am now manufacturing. It enables people with tremor disabilities to feed themselves. I have had success with several people with atethosis who cannot feed themselves without the device but can feed themselves quite easily with it.

The Neater Eater comes with crockery, cutlery and instruction manual. It is portable and could be taken to a cafe or restaurant, but it is obviously an aid for the disabled so it probably would not fully get over the problem of being stared at.

The Neater Eater costs £470, but of the 30 or so I have already sold, 7 have been bought for disabled people by the social services departments.

**Jonathan Michaelis**

Michaelis Engineering  
22 Garthland Drive  
Barnet  
Herts EN5 3AZ

munity. We are also planning new accommodation and have proposals for workshops.

My last point concerns the photograph and caption of Mark Vidgen which was regrettably not quite correct. Mark's prescription has been and is regularly checked and changed when necessary. He also has had a full support service provided by medical, health authorities and social services.

If any of your readers wishes to discuss our success and lead in service provision to the disabled at first hand I will be happy to arrange the visits.

**D E Durham**

Unit General Manager  
Paddington and North  
Kensington Health Authority  
Community Health Services  
Paddington Community  
Hospital  
Woodfield Road  
London W9 2BB

## DN on disc?

I am writing on behalf of my wife as well as myself to say how much easier it is to read *Disability Now* on the computer; it does away with all the troubles of handling the newspaper.

Two of the activities staff at this centre took the trouble to put the paper on to disc. It would benefit a great number of people if through some means it could be put on disc regularly and transmitted to other centres by means of a telephone every month.

**Peter Lloyd**

Princess Marina Centre  
Seer Green, Bucks

*The main stumbling block to taking advantage of the program developed at Princess Marina has been lack of computers in the editorial department of Disability Now. From the sale of some outdated equipment we have raised enough money to buy one Amstrad PC1512 with printer and Wordstar program and a modem. But to operate efficiently, each journalist should have a computer. We therefore need urgently 2 more Amstrads with printers and Wordstar programs.*

*Are there any organisations, companies or individuals who can help us? Having DN on disc would be a great benefit to many disabled people, as Peter Lloyd says - Editor.*

# (sic)

DN's diary column  
by Julian Marshall

## Phoneytic

The TUC conference in Blackpool last month ended up sounding like one of those "first the good news, then the bad news" jokes, as far as disabled people were concerned. The good news is that this year they used Palantype phonetic translation machines to convert the delegates' speeches instantaneously into words. The bad news is the machine ran amok on the first day. "Ooer moo moment must end sure we organ eyes more furtively," said Fred Jarvis. Rodney Bickerstaffe's plaintive "We're in crisis, we're going down the pan" became "We're in cry shits, we're going down the Thames." The rogue machine screamed "Error, error, error" as soon as "The Generally Secretary" Norman Willis started speaking. As he went on to say, "trade une Joanists" must unite against the attacks of Mrs Thatcher's "unscrew poo less gutterment."

More (very) good news: the general council was instructed to draw up and campaign for a bill of rights for disabled people, help to get work, and access to workplaces and public buildings (*see page 1*). The bad news is that for this year's delegates there was no ramp or lift to the rostrum, no disabled parking, no induction loops for the deaf and insufficient room to move at the front of the hall.

## R-r-rubbish

An American therapist told a self-help group for Californian stutters last month that watching Max Headroom could teach children to stutter. Theodore Emery warned that watching the computer-generated talking head with the sn-sn-snappy ripostes and cool stutter could set a bad example to the nation's hitherto eloquent youth.

"When youngsters start imitating Max by saying 'I'm J-J-Johnny,' the act of talking consciously has begun and confusion about how to talk will set in," he said.

If 1/2 an hour a week watching a stammering cartoon can have so much effect, perhaps the makers should put out a version dubbed into French – maybe children would pick that up just as easily.

## Wives

"I'll never cease to be amazed at the creative violence some people come up with," said a policeman on the arrival of James Burns at Houston Jail, Texas. Burns, 40-years-old and paralysed from the neck down, persuaded a friend to strap a gun to the arm of his wheelchair and cover it with his coat. He then confronted his new wife of just 2 weeks in a bar, accusing her of being unfaithful.

Somehow he managed to persuade her to put an innocent looking piece of string in his mouth. The other end of the string was, unfortunately for her, attached to the trigger, and Burns shot her 3 times, killing her outright.

Incidentally, Burns was paralysed when he was shot by his first wife!

Contributions, please, to DN

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## Labour backs income scheme

A number of significant moves were made on disability issues at the Labour Conference in Brighton last month.

The income of disabled people on benefits was high on the agenda and the conference overwhelmingly passed a motion committing the party to a comprehensive disability income scheme, after a debate in which disabled people spoke. This is a move many disability organisations have been campaigning for for years.

The conference also condemned the effect on severely disabled people of the changes in Social Security legislation due to take effect in April 1988, and delegates attacked the recent comments of John Moore, Minister for Health and Social Security, who has stated that he wants to see a move towards more means-tested benefits.

At a reception hosted by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Voluntary Organisations Personal Social Services Group (VOPSS), Bryan Gould, the newly elected member of Labour's National Executive Committee, promised that the party would take a fresh look at the relationship between the voluntary and state sectors. He looked for-

ward to a new partnership in which local authorities would still play the major role, but the voluntary and consumer groups would have a much greater say.



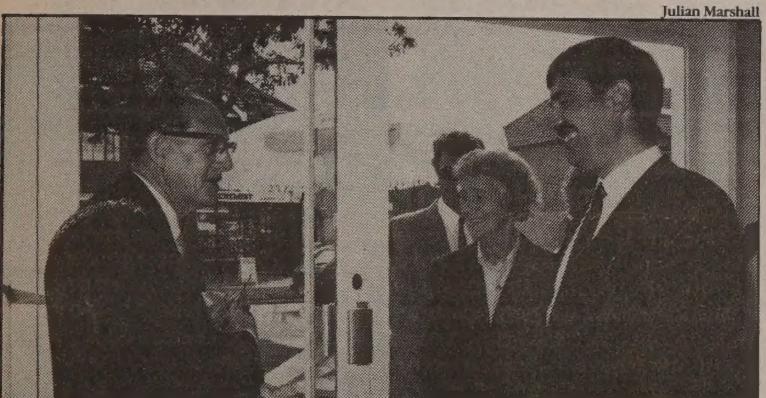
Bryan Gould

The employment of disabled people was the subject of a fringe meeting held by RADAR, which asked speakers how far the Labour movement ensured that disabled people get a fair deal in employment.

Alf Morris MP, shadow spokesman on disability, said that much had been done by past Labour governments, but that trade unions and the Labour party must do more to ensure that disabled people are given an equal chance for jobs, and within political parties.

Brian Lamb

Julian Marshall



The Mayor of Portsmouth, James Lodge, cuts the ribbon to the new centre, while group chairman Hedley Chappell looks on.

## CP Centre marks new era

A new era for Portsmouth and District Spastics Society began last month with the opening of their Cerebral Palsy Centre, claimed to be one of the first of its kind in Britain.

The centre offers advice and support for people with special needs and their families.

There will be a lending and reference library devoted to publications on cp and related topics, a mother and toddlers group and a drop-in centre.

"It is our most inventive project in nearly 40 years," said Hedley Chappell, chairman of the Portsmouth group. "It symbolises a new professionalism in the group."

It is hoped that the centre will also attract people with no direct connection with cp.

"One of the problems is that parents of disabled children do not know where to go for advice and are not in contact with a local group. This centre will hopefully provide more support," said

Pat Brooks, herself a parent of a child with cp.

The centre was opened by the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth and president of the local group, James Lodge. Afterwards, John Cox, director of The Spastics Society, told parents: "You are the front runners, the sharp end of the Society. We at head office exist to support you." He criticised the insensitive way in which doctors have treated parents of cp children in the past, to loud approval from those present. "If there were any doctors here today (none had replied to their invitations), I would say: 'get your act together and learn how to deal with parents'."

The smart new centre cost nearly £70,000 and includes a specially adapted flat upstairs. Most of the money came from capital released by closing a loss-making work centre. Rent from that building, now let to Hampshire social services, will help with the running costs.

came to disability issues.

Supporting the report, Bob Wareing MP promised to bring the matter of access to polling stations up in Parliament.

Among the organisations who support the report are RADAR, the Rathbone Society and the National League of the Blind and Disabled.

Disabled People and the 1987 General Election, by Eileen Fry, Campaigns Department, The Spastics Society, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ. £2.50.

## Voting barriers

*continued from page 1*

voting before the campaign had finished.

Several people had problems obtaining information about the election. Information available in residential units varied, but a hostel for mentally handicapped people in Greenwich stood out for the way it educated residents about political issues.

Very few of the disabled people interviewed had any faith in the political parties when it

## Parents claim doctors are "unsympathetic"

Support for the families of newborn disabled babies is haphazard and random, says a report published last month by the Campaign for People with Mental Handicaps.

It is based on a CMH survey of the policy and practice in over 80 per cent of district health authorities in England and Wales.

The survey found that just under two-thirds of local social services departments are not routinely told of the birth of a disabled child and that fewer than half the mothers of disabled children are visited by hospital social workers. Only 12 per cent of health authorities have written guidelines for staff on providing support for new parents.

The report suggests support services should be based on the following requirements:

- The birth of a disabled baby affects the whole family, so a range of services should be provided, covering their medical, psychological, practical, education and financial needs.
- This help should be mobilised as soon as the problem is diagnosed.
- Services should be provided on a multi-disciplinary basis and not through any one profession.
- Greater recognition should be given to the role of other parents and voluntary organisations in giving support.
- Each district needs co-ordination and agreed policy

## Services for visually disabled people "a disgrace" says RNIB

The standard of service provided for multi-handicapped visually impaired people in mental handicap hospitals is branded "a disgrace to our community" by a new RNIB report.

The report, *Out of Isolation*, says few of the 23,200 adults who have other disabilities in addition to being visually impaired have access to appropriate services, largely because these services tend to be geared to people with a single disability.

The service provided in ordinary mental handicap hospitals is particularly criticised. Despite the efforts of many hardworking and dedicated nurses, the report says, residents are rarely given the chance to learn new skills or maintain old ones. There is little involvement in daily activities or stimuli of any sort and there is a generally low level of staff skills.

The authors, Anthony Best (University of Birmingham), Paul Ennals (SENSE) and Peter Johnson (RNIB), propose a model of services building on those already provided to include

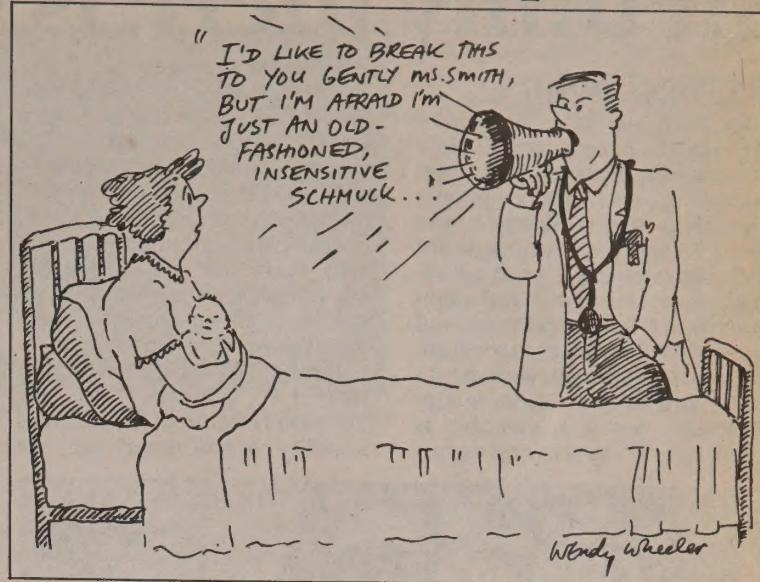
### Minister says no

*continued from page 1*

director of The Spastics Society. "It means that some very severely disabled people who are living independently may be forced eventually to stay in residential care as they will not have the income to support themselves, while some young people may not be able to move into the community."

"We have been following Government policy on community care and encouraging independence. Now we may see severely disabled people forced back into dependence on others and at great cost to the Health Department and social security system."

"The Minister has promised to write to us explaining this decision further, and I only hope that he may yet think again about the consequences of his decision."



statements to achieve these aims.

Another survey by Dr Barnardo's Merthyr Family Resource Centre says 4 out of 10 families are told unsympathetically that their child has a mental disability and 6 out of 10 said predictions about the child's abilities did not match their later experience.

As a result, the Standing Conference of Voluntary Organisations for People with a Mental Handicap in Wales, is conducting a survey of Welsh practices for a report due next March.

A working party of parents, voluntary groups and professionals has also been set up to

recommend practical improvements.

★ A new video launched by the Kings Fund Centre deals with the difficult task of how parents are told that their newborn baby has a disability.

*Shared Concern* is intended for doctors, medical students and other health care professionals involved in the support of parents. The idea was conceived and seen through to completion by SOPHIE, a north London parents group.

The video uses dramatised scenes and interviews with parents and professionals to show the good and bad ways of breaking the news, but it makes no claim to a perfect method.

It is intended to be followed by a group discussion, and tutors' notes and a booklet of guidelines have been produced to help this.

The video can be hired from CFL Vision, Chalfont Grove, Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 9TN. Tel: (02407) 4433. £10.50. To buy (VHS only): £45, from the Kings Fund Centre, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NF.

Begin at the Beginning CMH Publications, 5 Kentings, Comberton, Cambs, CB3 7DT; £2.

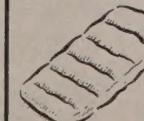
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## Community Transport Conference and Exhibition

# In unity there is strength

by Nigel Smith

The Fifth Annual Community Transport Event at Hatfield Polytechnic last month was bigger than ever: more people attending the conference and the 25 training workshops, more exhibitors giving a good coverage of special needs and community transport operators, and around 1,000 visitors to see it all.

Richard Armitage, secretary of the organisers, Community Transport Services, saw this as evidence of "the growing matur-

Ride" at the conference.

David Hunter, LDU's coordinator, said that while one trip a week was a modest goal, which would be quite unacceptable to able-bodied people, it was a visible target over 2 years. It would cost an extra £50 million. At present there are 50,000 people with disabilities registered with London Dial-a-Rides, but only 4,500 passenger trips a week.

Debbie Seaburn, West Cumbria CT, pointed out that 200,000 Londoners identified as mobility handicapped are not

on wheels and mobile day centres. Smaller vehicles will be available where they would be more appropriate than minibuses. Those interested should contact UK Grants, Help the Aged, St James's Walk, London EC1R 0BE.

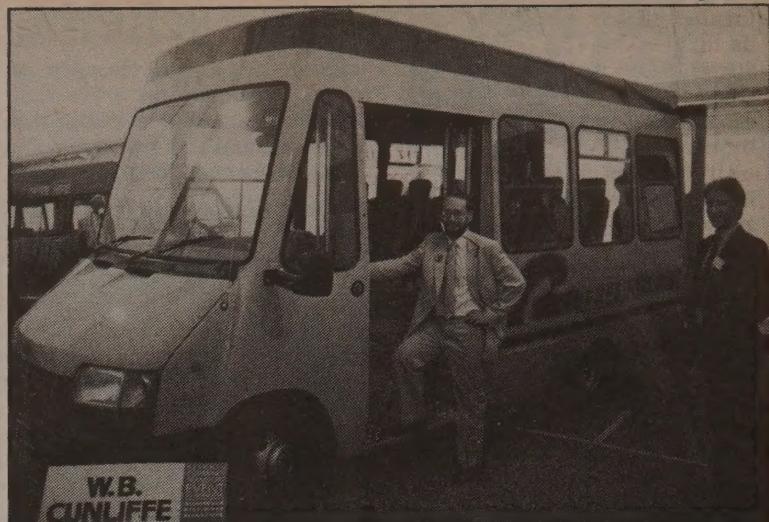
Few developments on the vehicle front since the Mobility Roadshow (see DN July), but the Bedford Astramax 365L High Roof Van is now available with automatic transmission and power steering, which means that Mobility International's Chairman Astra conversion is too. This is good news for disabled drivers who need a vehicle in which another wheelchair user can travel. The automatic Chairman Astra with power steering costs from £10,786.

Probably the best vehicle for a family with a wheelchair user is the Brotherwood conversion of the Nissan Prairie. Designed on the inspiration of John Lambert, an ex-pilot who is now a C5 tetraplegic, it has an optional, unobtrusive raised rear roof and a space for a wheelchair user behind the front seats reached by a shallow ramp. Swivel seats are available.

A big advantage is that seats are positioned either side of the wheelchair space as well, so the wheelchair user can travel next to another passenger. Prices start at £10,762.

Manchester coachbuilders W B Cunliffe showed an example of the Ford Transit minibuses they are supplying to the exciting new City of Bradford Dial-a-Ride service - "Freedom Ride". Three vehicles will be used to operate a service for people living in the city centre or a mile beyond who cannot use public transport. The Freedom Ride will be available 7 days a week, 8am to 10.30pm and cost 20p a ride.

The rear-engined VW Transporter/Caravelle has been



Community Transport Services secretary and conference organiser Richard Armitage with the new Bradford "Freedom Ride".

Transit, Sherpa, Talbot, Express or Bedford Midi minibuses can be hired for £121 a week. I wish they could be persuaded not to use the demeaning "Welfare vehicle" for these minibuses.

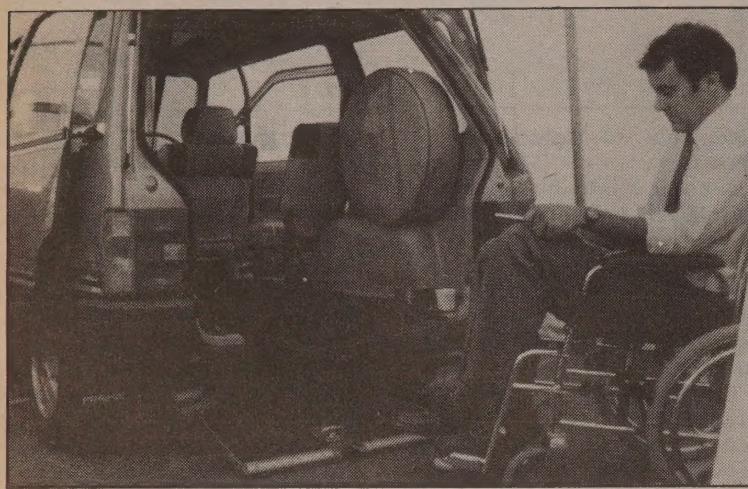
Mobility International, 18-21 Church Gate, Thatcham, Newbury, Berkshire RG13 4PH. Tel: (0635) 64464.

Rod Brotherwood, Station Garage, Yetminster, Sherborne, Dorset. Tel: (0935) 872603

VAG (UK) Ltd, Commercial Vehicle Division, Frankland Road, Blagrove, Swindon, Wilts SN5 8YU. Tel: (0793) 40231



The Invatravel conversion of the Volkswagen Transporter.



Rod Brotherwood with the converted Nissan Prairie.

ity of community transport, with a move towards a more professional approach to transport provision and operation."

Community transport as a whole has been strengthened by the decision of CTS and the Community Transport Association to merge. The result must be more weight when it comes to lobbying Government as well as bringing the CTS training workshops, conference exhibitions and *Community Transport Magazine* under one truly representative body.

The London Dial-a-Ride Users Association launched its campaign "One trip a week - a two year plan for London Dial-a-

registered as Dial-a-Ride users.

The audience agreed that the campaign was only a start and, with Alan Rees of the Edinburgh Council of Social Services, that it was of national significance.

Help the Aged, who have donated 476 lift-equipped vehicles in their national minibus scheme, announced a Community Transport Scheme during the conference. A direct response to bus de-regulation, it will be aimed particularly at rural areas where there is a pressing need for specialised transport.

Help the Aged wants to support community car schemes including care and repair of elderly people's homes, meals

on wheels and mobile day centres. Smaller vehicles will be available where they would be more appropriate than minibuses. Those interested should contact UK Grants, Help the Aged, St James's Walk, London EC1R 0BE.

Transit, Sherpa, Talbot, Express or Bedford Midi minibuses can be hired for £121 a week. I wish they could be persuaded not to use the demeaning "Welfare vehicle" for these minibuses.

Mobility International, 18-21 Church Gate, Thatcham, Newbury, Berkshire RG13 4PH. Tel: (0635) 64464.

Rod Brotherwood, Station Garage, Yetminster, Sherborne, Dorset. Tel: (0935) 872603

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DN/10/87

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## CARING TRANSPORT



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Disability issues were noticeable for their absence from the agenda at the first United Kingdom Social Services Conference in Glasgow last month. But the first resolution – passed unanimously by the 600 delegates – did call on the Government to commit itself to providing cash to local authorities, to enable them to meet the requirements of the Disabled Persons Act 1986.

Councillor Paul Nolan, chair of Lothian region social work committee which proposed the motion, contrasted the way the Social Security Act was being rushed through “despite widespread condemnation by everyone consulted by the Government,” with the delays in implementing the Disabled Persons Act.

“Even the money for initial assessments is not available, and the Disabled Persons Act is progressing at snail’s pace,” he said, “but legislation that disadvantages disabled people is passing like an express train.”

It was argued that councils should pre-empt the Government by outlining how they themselves would implement the Act if they had the resources to do so.

Councillor Ken Hemsley of Cheshire County Council told the conference that he had travelled up by train and it had been very apparent to him that facilities for wheelchair users were wanting.

He asked local authorities to examine what they themselves were doing. He criticised councils which refused to sell specially adapted homes to their tenants. He also thought people with disabilities were put off seeking election to councils because municipal buildings were often inaccessible.

Unthinking use of language in relation to disability was criticised. Blanket terms such as “the disabled” or “the handicapped” were condemned. Speakers said that until language was put right, social services officers and coun-

# UK Social Services Conference

reports from Ian Sutherland



Alan Wylie

Question time: from left, Tony Newton, MP Minister for Health; Chris Baur, editor, Scotsman; Charles Kennedy MP and Tom Clarke MP.

cillors could not be regarded as sincere about wanting to include everyone in their work.

## Tom Clarke “Fight!”

Tom Clarke MP was present all 3 days of the conference. He told *Disability Now* he was shocked that Malcolm Rifkind, a member of the cabinet, could address the conference for 45 minutes and not mention disability or the Disabled Persons Act.

Four of the 18 sections of the Act were working, he said, but they were the “low cost or no cost sections.”

He called on disabled people and their organisations to “fight, fight and fight again” to ensure the Act comes into full operation. “The Government’s attitude is hypocritical,” he said. The resource implications of the legislation had been fully discussed in Parliament, yet the Government was now saying it wanted talks with local authorities on resource implications.

Community care, he said, was also one of his priorities: it was grossly under-resourced and people were being discharged from hospitals into a form of care that simply did not exist.

## Community care

A resolution was passed reaffir-

ming that local authorities should have the main responsibility for managing community care while working with other statutory and voluntary organisations.

Speakers pointed out that most of the people in need of community care were already living in the community and they wanted the Government to ensure that local councils would not have to meet additional costs without a transfer of resources from the National Health Service.

In his speech on the theme of the conference, “Boundaries of Care”, Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland, said that people had a clear preference to keep or regain a place in the community and to have control over their daily lives. “We want to encourage this trend”, he said, “but there are limitations to what we can do from the centre.”

He called the contribution made by the voluntary sector to personal social services “outstanding”, and said that voluntary bodies were often better placed than local authorities to provide services. “But a first and essential step is to acknowledge that boundaries exist and to recognise the problems from this.”

## Discrimination workshop

Discrimination against people with disabilities was the theme of the workshop run by The Spastics Society.

After an introduction by Douglas Shapland, chairman of the Society, Dr Eileen Fry talked of 2 research papers she has produced, on discrimination in employment last year, and on the difficulties disabled voters face, (see page 1).

John Belcher, director of social services, stressed that disabled people must have choice and an income sufficient to allow choice. “The Society is committed to fighting the injustice of discrimination,” he said, “but is society?”

Legislation, better services and education of the public and decision makers were necessary.

Ron Gerver spoke about his own experiences of discrimination especially when looking for a job. He said equal opportunities and possibly positive discrimination were needed.

The Society’s attitude changing video, *Land of Droog*, was shown to delegates.

## RNID survey

At the Royal National Institute

for the Deaf workshop, a report was released showing that social services departments do not provide enough environmental aids, such as visual doorbells or vibrating alarm clocks, to help hearing impaired people. According to Mike Martin, director of communication services at the RNID, only one person in a thousand is receiving help with special devices when 50 per cent of the elderly population are estimated to need it.

*So Little for So Many* found that: there were not enough suitably trained staff so people could wait up to a year for their aid; restricted budgets; inadequate information given to potential customers and lack of information on numbers and types of aids issued.

The RNID is trying to persuade the Government to fund an Open University course to help reduce the shortage of social workers in the field of deafness.

It is also working on a module to add to the training of occupational therapists who are involved in the supply of aids other than NHS hearing aids.

## Disabled councillor disappointed

Mike Devenny, vice-chair of Islington’s social services, was disappointed that the conference did not really address questions of disability.

He told *Disability Now*: “One of the major parts of social services is to work with people with disabilities – physical or mental. Elderly people are a very large client group and many of them are disabled. It is a bit strange that there wasn’t more emphasis on these aspects.”

Like others, he noticed there was no signer for deaf people at the conference, no hearing loop systems and no braille papers or visual aids.

Material also supplied by John Tizard, Central Social Services Manager, The Spastics Society.

## Mary Wilkinson reports

If a voluntary code of good practice based on minimum standards is accepted, work centres run by groups affiliated to The Spastics Society will be pioneers in the field.

At a unique seminar, held last month at Nottingham University, proposals for the code were agreed by nearly 30 disabled people working with managers, local group committee members and staff of The Spastics Society.

“If we can move into the 21st Century with a code of practice that will be the envy of others – and we can – then we shall have regained the pioneering role with which we started”, said vice-chairman Derek Ashcroft.

A formal code will now be drawn up and presented to the Executive Council.

The aim of the seminar was to discuss suggestions for improving work centres put forward in a working party report published last April.

The report had strongly criticised the centres, blaming their low standards on lack of money, lack of expertise among the management committees and lack of an overall standard.

“The Executive Council of The Spastics Society is 120 per cent behind this report and will do everything we can to help local groups to develop and further the services you want”, chairman Douglas Shapland said.

The seminar gave disabled users their first chance to voice in public their feelings about work centres and the people who run

them.

They found support in a speech from Sue Smith, a member of the working party, who was in a work centre herself 20 years ago.

She challenged them to stop accepting second best. “You as a person with disability have as much right to responsibility, to challenge, to choice as everyone else. But unless you begin to see that for yourself, you cannot expect others to do it for you.”

She urged them to take care of their appearance, arguing that people judge by appearances and a positive image shows that you mean business.

She also challenged the managers and management committees of the work centres.

Offering the slogan “People first, centres second”, she asked them to look at their centres from a fresh perspective. “Would you accept the standard of care? Would you accept the boredom? Would you accept the frustration that your service is offering to the people around you? If the answer is no for yourself, then really you’ve got to think again and begin to ask what can I offer that is a better option.”

Sue Smith listed the improvements she would like made – freedom to make choices and carry them out; a nicer environment; an end to labels (“Mr and Mrs Bloggs, and everyone else Charlie or Jimmy”); opportunities to develop the whole person.

“We’ve got to challenge each other and not be afraid to say what we think and what we feel”,

## Disabled people help draft pioneering proposals

- Workers to participate in management
- Needs-led services, not services imposed on people
- Initial and on-going assessment
- Positive training for management, users and staff together
- A balanced mix of choice between work and other activities, with the opportunity for users to move on and to have responsibility for their own lives
- An advocacy scheme
- Managers to be allowed to manage and given all the tools of management
- A standard pay structure for managers, reviewed regularly
- Clearly defined contracts between disabled users and the centre and between the centre and the sponsoring authority
- Progress towards a nationally negotiated fee with local authorities for workers in local group work centres
- A forward plan for each work centre
- A monitoring service

she said. “And we’ve got to challenge The Spastics Society. They’ve had the courage to take on board the report. But they’ve also got to have the courage to make the changes and to carry it through.”

Questions in open session and comments privately or in the workshops picked up many of Sue Smith’s points.

Disabled users admitted they were frightened to question the service they were given. One who had was told, “If you don’t like it you can go.”

When encouraged, however, the comments began to spill out – how powerless they felt to influence the way their centre was run, how bored they were with contract work, how hard they worked for £4 a week (the legal limit), how managers would put them down for asking about work outside, or just be “too busy” to see them.

“If you are brushed off, you accept it”, said one girl.

Managers, too, revealed that their hands were sometimes tied. Management committees may not allow them a place on the committee or give them the power to manage. One manager said he was not involved with “the financial side” or with hiring staff. Another admitted that members of his management committee would interfere in the running of the centre.

Some work centres have such low pay levels that it makes recruiting suitable staff difficult.

One manager said he had tried for 15 years to get even one disabled person on to his manage-

ment committee.

How to establish a balance between work and other activities was discussed; also the problems of finding alternatives to contract work which may be keeping a centre afloat.

The workshops were not only a chance to let off steam. Examples of good practice seen in a specially made video stimulated discussion, and users from the more progressive centres talked enthusiastically about their activities and responsibilities.

Roy Dredge



Sue Smith: challenging

By the end of the weekend, Bill Hargreaves, chairman of the working party, was claiming that attitudes had changed. “I sense a tremendous groundswell of new thinking,” he said.

Some local group members did not show much evidence of this. But a cross-section of people went away invigorated.

“At last I think disabled people are being seen as people”, said Roger Hadley from Norwich. “It’s taken them a long while to get to this point. We mustn’t let it go back.”

**sport · sport · sport**

# Variety is the spice of sport

Martin Mansell reports on an international Festival of Sport

Athletes from 15 countries came to Glasgow at the end of August to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Scottish Sports Association for the Disabled in a Festival of Sport. It was open to all disability groups including people with mental handicaps.

Three world records were broken during the week. Linda Brown (Scotland) won the 100m (Class 2, female) in 58 seconds. Darren Jordan (Ireland) carried off the 100m (Class 2, male) in 27.70 seconds, and Ann Woffinden (Scotland) won the shot (class 2, female) with a throw of 5.55 m.

The events started with table tennis and fencing, followed by a banquet given by the Lord Provost of Glasgow at the City Chambers – I was glad to see disabled sport taken so seriously.

It ended with bowls, basketball, wheelchair dancing and a



Eric Green of England (Hinckley) put up an impressive performance to vanquish the other competitors in class 5 javelin.

gala party.

One of the main events was athletics for people with cerebral palsy, fought out between England, Scotland and Ireland at Crownpoint Sports Park.

Next day they were into boccia and slalom. In the individual boccia event, England provided finalists in both class 1 and 2, with Ireland winning the team event.

The rest of the Festival was spread all over the city with a good variety of sport including golf – for the first time – swimming, fencing and volleyball.

Competition from all the countries reached a very high standard.

The only sport which could have been better was volleyball. Mixing able-bodied and disabled athletes did not seem to work. I think more thought should go into the organisation when able-bodied and disabled are entered



Norman Burns of England (Newcastle) won the class 4 slalom in 1 min 37 secs. Officials watch to see he does not cross the lines.

in the same competition.

The officiating was also impressive. It was good to see such a well-organised and well-controlled event. The Scottish Sports Association for the Disabled put in a lot of work and co-ordinated smoothly with all disability groups.

Inevitably there are mistakes in a competition of this size. I noticed, for example, that the slalom course was not set out be-

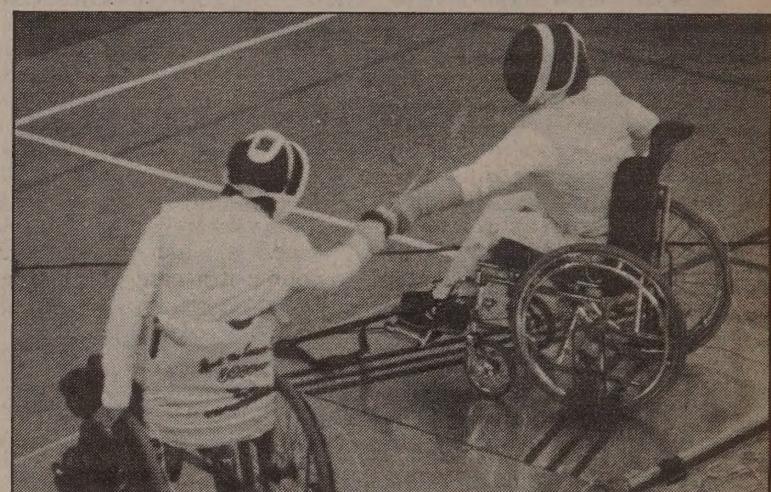
fore the competitors arrived, so they had to sit around waiting and risk getting cold if it had not been such nice weather. It happened because some of the officials were doubling as care staff and had other demands on their attention.

The Scottish CP Sports and Leisure group might benefit from a full-time, paid leisure officer, as the English have, to co-ordinate and control CP events.



Michael McCormick of Ireland won the class 2 medicine ball (above) with a kick of 8.87 metres.

Champion swimmer Martin Mansell will be on the Disability Now stand at Naidex on Thursday, 15 October – come and meet him!



Competitors from France and Germany spar for the fencing title.

## First National Cerebral Palsy Championships

# CP athletes strive for excellence

Howard Bailey reports

The first National Cerebral Palsy Championships which included boccia, table-tennis, power lifting, shooting and cycling, track and athletics, was held last month. Over 350 people came to the Ludwig Guttmann Sports Stadium in Stoke Mandeville.

John Whetton, former Olympic 1500m runner, opened the championships. His speech was on the Olympic theme that it isn't always the winning but the striving that is important.

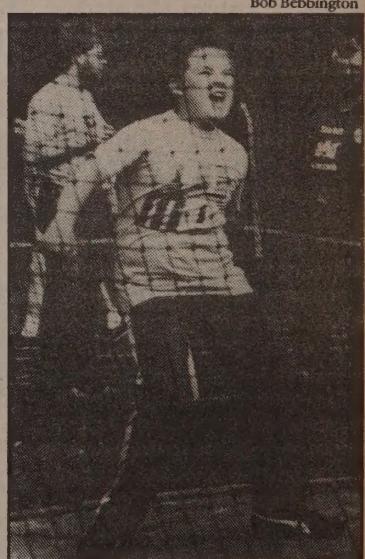
Certainly his words were put into practice by athletes all through the weekend, from Kenneth Churchill the youngest qualifier, aged 13, through to world champion record holder in club, discus and javelin, Michael Walker.

Outside the athletes' high standard of performance, the highlight of the championships was the officiating – by all those people who gave up yet another weekend to help put on this major event.

There were guest appearances in the track and field from Scottish athletes who will be challenging for a place in the Great Britain team for the 1988 Para-



Zoe Edge, 13, from Fountaindale School, was voted Outstanding Athlete by the officials.



Kenneth Churchill, 13, from Middlesbrough, was the youngest athlete of the Championships. Here he is preparing to throw the discus.

man in the street, he said, and transport him to events like this, the task of changing those attitudes would be so much easier.

Full results of the championships will be in CP Leisure News (Number 14), available free, this month from 16 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 5HQ, tel: 01-387 9571.

Howard Bailey is Leisure Services Officer for The Spastics Society.

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**FREPOST COUPON**



DN/10/87

by Karen Wingate

**Child abuse is a subject that regularly makes big headline news. "Granny bashing" is now also a recognised phenomenon.**

But violence directed against people with disabilities or learning difficulties, who like elderly people and children are often dependent on others physically and financially, is still a subject that is rarely discussed. Very little research has been done into the problem, but that is not to say it does not exist.

Indeed the general feeling among disabled people and those working with them is that there is a widespread hidden problem of abuse of disabled people, particularly in the home, which should be investigated.

As people with disabilities and learning difficulties move into the community from residential care they become more at risk of intimidation and attack by strangers, neighbours, and members of the community at large.

While violent attacks on disabled people in the street are rare, victimisation, particularly of mentally disabled people, is more common.

In a study of 88 mentally handicapped adults moving into the community completed last year, Margaret Flynn, a social worker with a doctorate in special education, found that about a quarter suffered victimisation.

This ranged from name-calling and other verbal abuse to physical and sexual attacks. People were more likely to suffer harassment and violence if they were conspicuous in any way, for example having an unusual appearance or walk. Those who were victimised were also less satisfied with their homes, and became unhappy in personal relationships.

But what would seem to be even more common than incidents of intimidation and violence in the community is abuse by carers within the home, or a residential centre.

Peter Knight, acting principal of Dene College, which runs a further education course for severely physically and mentally handicapped young adults, said: "There's no doubt about the fact

Violent physical attacks on disabled people, as on able-bodied people, are rare, newspaper headlines notwithstanding. But since the police do not keep statistics of how many disabled people are attacked each year though they do for elderly people, women and children, it is impossible to be sure just how often it occurs.

Even so, many disabled people feel vulnerable and worry about the possibility of being attacked.

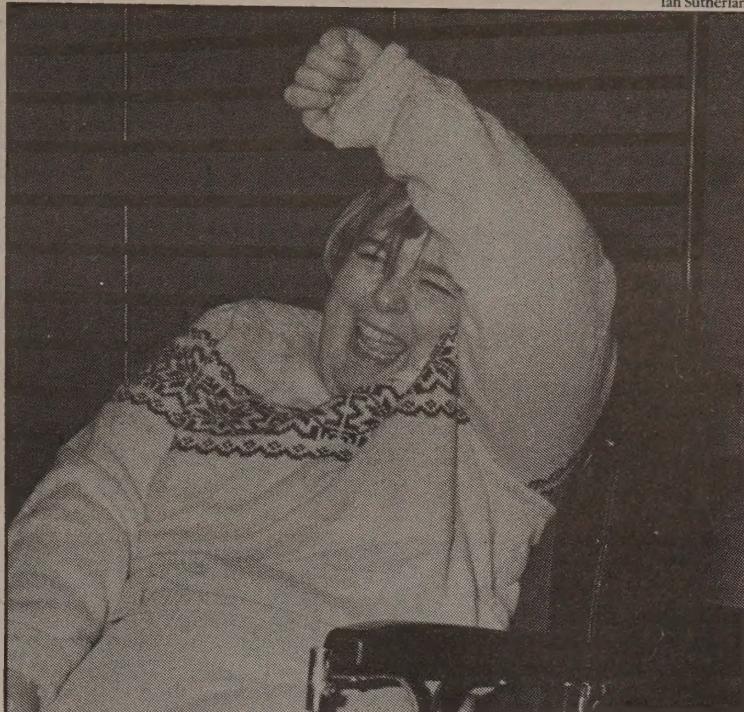
Merle Davies, a regular contributor to *Disability Now*, who is disabled, explained her fears: "I am very conscious of how vulnerable I am when I get home alone in the evenings. Although we have a forecourt it borders onto the common, and I don't feel I can get out of my car and into my house quick enough!"

Merle carries a portable alarm, which lets off an ear-splitting screech – a simple but effective way to boost self-confidence as it could frighten off an attacker and summon help at the same time. Other alarms can be attached to a wheelchair or stick, and some can be operated with the chin, elbow or by suction. For a complete list of alarms and suppliers contact the Disabled Living Foundation (*address below*).

Another way to boost self-confidence is to take a course in

# Violence

Ian Sutherland



## - is there a hidden problem?

that parental violence exists. The difficulty is that it is not well documented anywhere. The signs are there – if a student lifts his arms to protect himself when a member of staff approaches with a raised hand, it is a clear indication that he is used to being hit.

"There's no doubt that those who are profoundly handicapped and cannot communicate easily have great difficulty in finding someone to listen if they want to tell of abuse. For one thing they are limited in terms of access to other people. And of course if a case of abuse ever goes to court, which is rare, they are going to be at a disadvantage. Courts are very cautious about lending credence to evidence given by a person with a learning difficulty."

Peter Knight blames a large part of the problem on the lack of support parents and carers receive, a factor echoed by many others.

"Parents get very frustrated, and the situation is exacerbated when the dependent is unable to articulate their needs. I think in a

self-defence. Unfortunately there are few which cater for disabled people, particularly wheelchair users.

While an able-bodied person is taught how to temporarily surprise the attacker and put them off-balance to gain time to run away, that is no use to someone who cannot move quickly.

## How to protect yourself

Last year Jan Gould of the Disabled Society in Camden managed to persuade a police expert in self-defence to run a course designed for disabled women, after one of their members had been mugged. It was a revelation to the special constables and to the women who took part, as they discovered how much can be done from a wheelchair, with practise. The chair itself can be used as a weapon if swung round sharply, and with the right technique even a frail person can learn to unbalance an attacker.

Sadly, there are no plans to repeat the course, but there is an

number of cases there is a resort to violence," he said.

Lin Berwick, DN's telephone counsellor, also believes the problem of abuse is quite common. "The feelings of frustration that spill over into aggressive responses are very, very widespread. If you are looking after a disabled person on a limited budget the tensions are enormous, and it often comes out on the person they love most. Carers don't get enough support when they reach the end of their tether. And no-one is reading the danger signals."

A recent report by the Association of Carers, *Can a Carer Say No?* bears this out. It included several comments from carers, most of them looking after elderly disabled people at home.

A woman from Droitwich wrote of her senile father: "After he had set light to his kitchen 3 times I couldn't take any more. I was terrified I was going to hit him – hard." Although she notified the doctor, health visitor and social services to arrange for a break, she had no response

excellent book, *Self Defence for Women* (Hamlyn £6.95), which describes many simple but powerful techniques.

The South Camden Women's Centre, which last year invited two disabled self-defence teachers from Holland to run two courses in Britain, has set up a trust to raise money for more courses and to provide specially trained teachers. They would like to hear from anyone who is interested (*address below*).

Finally, to avoid the risk of intruders into your home, make sure all doors and windows are fitted with good locks and that the front door has a spy hole and safety chain. If you need advice contact the crime prevention officer at your local police station – in many areas they will make personal home visits.

Help the Aged is launching a national campaign for home security this month including leaflets and a video "Be safe" produced in association with the Metropolitan Police.

*Help the Aged, St James Walk, London EC1R OBE. Tel: 01-253 0253.*

*South Camden Women's Centre, 90 Cromer Street, London WC1. Tel: 01-278 0120.*

*Disabled Living Foundation, 380-284 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU. Tel: 01-289 6111.*

and was eventually forced to give them 48 hours notice that she was quitting the house.

Another carer from Barton, Cambridge, met the same kind of unhelpful reaction: "I have told the GP and social services that I have come close to hitting my mother and I am fearful that I may do so one day. Their reaction was silence."

Claire Glasman of Winvisible, Women with Visible and Invisible Disabilities, sees violence as an almost inevitable result of the low value that society places on people with disabilities, often leaving them more dependent, physically and financially, than is necessary.

"If more money was put into providing technology for disabled people so that they could be more physically and financially independent, then we would be less open to abuse. People with disabilities need to have more power in relationships.

"Those who are being mistreated by their carers are unlikely to report it, because they are dependent upon that person. There is always the fear that they can easily be retaliated against. Unless they have somewhere to go, they will just keep silent."

Earlier this year the Gateshead Council for the Disabled made a plea in *Disability Now*, and to social services departments, for anyone doing research in the area of disability and violence to contact them.

Although they had no response from researchers, they did receive several letters from people with disabilities who were being mistreated.

"Violence was clearly a non-issue for the main service providers we contacted. We were met with blank stares from social services," said Dave Norman of the Council. "But in the past year we have seen 20 women with disabilities who regularly suffer violence within the home from their husbands. We suspect we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg."

Although no formal research has been done, Dave Norman said that they were able to draw some conclusions from the 20 women they knew about. "All of them were very visibly disabled

wheelchair users, and in the majority of cases they had gone into relationships with men who had a history of violence."

The men seemed to have been seeking out women who were particularly vulnerable, while the women were prepared to make sacrifices in order to have children, and perhaps as a way out of the parental home or an institution.

A number of practical difficulties make it even harder for a disabled woman to escape such a situation than an able-bodied one, said Dave Norman. These include financial dependence and lack of access to refuges. Also, high on list, was the fear that the courts would award custody of children to the husband, on the grounds that the disabled mother may not be able to look after them.

"There really is a need for someone to do thorough research in this area," he said. "Until we know the size of the problem it is very difficult for anyone to tackle it."

*A study of Prediction in the Community Placements of Adults with a Mental Handicap, Dr Margaret Flynn.*

*Can a Carer Say No? National Council for Carers, 29 Chilworth Mews, London W2 3RG.*

*Carers support organisations: Association of Carers, First Floor 21-22 New Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4QJ. Tel: (0634) 813981.*

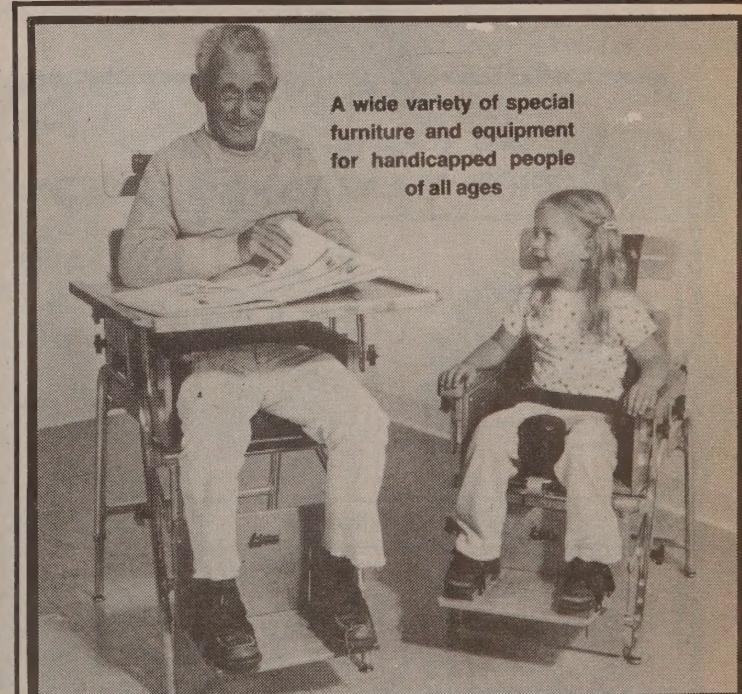
*Crossroads Care Attendants Scheme Trust, 10 Regent Place, Rugby, Warks. Tel: (0788) 73653.*

### Share your problems by phone

If you want advice on a personal or spiritual problem, why not talk to Lin Berwick, *Disability Now's* telephone counsellor, who is disabled herself?

Lin is at the end of the line on Monday afternoons from 1pm to 5pm, and on Thursdays from 6pm to 10pm.

Her telephone number is Hornchurch (04024) 58325.



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Doug McKenzie, PPS

# THE BIG WEEK

Beneath all the razzamatazz – the famous names and fundraising feats, the jokes and clouds of balloons – The Spastics Society's National Week (12-20 September) had a serious purpose. It was trying to bring people together, both inside and outside the Society, in a common aim: to improve public awareness of disability and shift public opinion, even a little, towards appreciating what people with disabilities can do.

Many carefully organised events around the country contributed to this.

Transform '87 proved, even to the disabled students

themselves, that they could travel on all sorts of transport between Cornwall and London.

Disabled people were involved in a microtechnology roadshow, an employment conference, an arts day and a sports day.

A new leaflet, *Changing Society: Participation and Disabled People* from the Campaigns Department challenged political parties to give disabled people the same political rights as other citizens.

These were some of the more serious events which contributed to a successful Big Week.



Leslie Crowther (Stars Organisation for Spastics) won't let any passerby outside Park Crescent miss the chance to sponsor a balloon.

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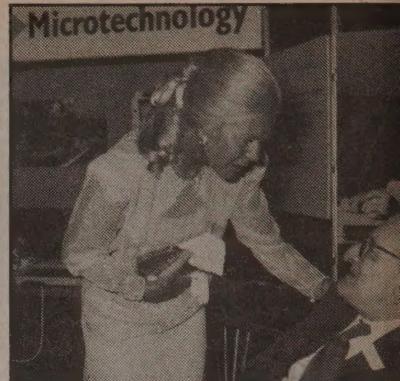


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The Duchess of Kent, patron of the Spastics Society, and its president the Duke of Wellington, holding the balloons at the V & A party (from left) Bob Monkhouse and Brian Rix, director of MENCAP.

Above: The duchess talks to Louis Rix, director of Brighton & Hove District group.



Transform '87 (11 students, 5 staff) arrived at Fitzroy Square, London, in a brewer's dray completing 10 days travel from Churchtown Farm, Cornwall, in or on some 15 forms of transport. In the party greeting them were Douglas Shapland, chairman, John Cox, director (left) and Nerys Hughes.

Inset: Sheila Rawstorne, director of National Week.



Natalie Pearce of Transform '87 meets Douglas Shapland and TV star Nerys Hughes.



Tony Long, chairman of Thames Valley District group sells his first tag at a stall. 5,000 balloons were launched and £1,000 and the annual wheelbarrow race raised another £9,000.



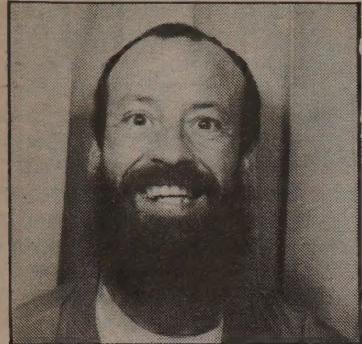
Dafydd Wigley MP, president of the Society in Wales, visited Longfields Centre, Swansea and met users and staff.



Above: Picking the winner. Champion ticket sellers John and Brenda Hanson helped raise £25,000 for the SOS National Raffle.



Right: after 3 weeks and 330 miles on foot, with a bucket of sand, the Sands Across Britain team from Ipswich and East Suffolk group reached Felixstowe beach to be greeted by the Mayor, Michael Goodman.



## Question how you see and treat yourselves says Bob Findlay

It is time to reject the approach to disability which demands that people with disabilities "come to terms" with the implications of their conditions on other people or in specific social situations.

That is not the issue.

By asking us to "cope" with our conditions, people who use this approach reinforce all the prejudices to be found in the traditional oppressive medical definition of disability. It results in blaming the "victim" for their own oppression and therefore makes us *responsible* for the oppressive situations we encounter.

Nearly all the forces within the growing Movement of people with disabilities would disagree with Margaret Morgan's advice. But when it comes to offering an alternative approach we see a sharp difference appear.

Carl Ford offers the usual response given by the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation. "Disability" becomes redefined as the social consequences brought about by lack of provision made available to people with disabilities and lack of understanding from able-bodied people as a result of "segregation".

I reject this notion of "disability" and its cause because it is too simplistic.

I agree that disability is a social situation, determined by society's perceptions of "normality", etc, but the experiences of segregation many people with disabilities face are a product of

# A call to action

## Two views of how disabled people should see their disability and tackle the barriers imposed by society\*

oppression, not the ultimate cause of it. UPIAS cannot offer a way out of "disability" other than an end to segregated living and full integration of people with disabilities into mainstream society. All of us want to see this occur, but it would not bring our oppression to an end.

People with disabilities are oppressed in many ways. Usually we focus on material manifestations—lack of access, low incomes, poor services—but oppression exists at other levels too—social and personal, for example.

Perceptions of normality and abnormality have led to us being categorized as "different". By being seen and treated as "different", we have been forced into regarding ourselves as "inferior"—the media plays a crucial role in this. Because the traditional medical definition of disability sees it as a tragedy that has to be measured in terms of functional loss, everything about disability becomes negative.

Lack of self-pride and a poor self-image (commonplace amongst most oppressed groups) makes it difficult to have a good social relationship with those who are seen as superior or who make the person feel inferior. Public places, therefore, are hard to "cope with" because many people question a disabled person's right to be there, or to be seen there.

Only by saying "I am proud of myself. I am me and I don't care if able-bodied people are screwed up by their own oppressive notions of normality" can we start to liberate ourselves and lay the basis for a general attack on the inequalities facing people with disabilities.

UPIAS claims to be the radical voice of our Movement. But they have no understanding of the personal politics involved. They offer an abstract model based upon a political analysis which does not stand up to careful study. They define "disability" as

something to be overthrown, but fail to offer the means through which this can be done.

It is time to look beyond the narrow approaches offered by Margaret Morgan and Carl Ford. We must tackle the social oppression people face by undermining how society addresses "disability".

People with disabilities must start to question not only how able-bodied society sees and treats them, but how they see and treat themselves. Until people with disabilities get actively involved in the disability rights movement, they will have to live with the negative attitudes found within society.

Only by organising together and openly debating out a strategy for overthrowing the external *and* internal oppression we all face can we hope to give people a satisfactory answer to the question of how to deal with the handicapping attitudes of an able-bodied society.

*Bob Findlay is development worker for Birmingham Disability Rights Group.*

## Convince the public it is in their interest says Valerie Lang

Having lived with athetosis for over 40 years, I have "come to terms" with it in so far as I accept that it is with me until death.

"Coming to terms" with it does not mean that I no longer mind its effects. If I am honest, I probably feel frustrated more easily now than I did when I was younger.

No, I see "coming to terms" as learning to recognise the physical improvements which I may or may not achieve, as against those areas where I need to accept help.

There are both short-term and

long-term solutions to problems.

In the short-term, if one wants to eat in a restaurant and feels self-conscious, then I think it is better to sit with one's back to the room, avoiding unpleasant stares than to be frightened to go.

The long-term solution is of course to educate the public into accepting the idea that we who have disabilities are a normal part of society. I would agree that we all have a role to play in that. I feel I do my bit towards increasing public education by eating out with my friends and going about generally.

But the short-term expedient is necessary first—I am certainly too impatient to wait for my meal out until I can be guaranteed social acceptance and good manners!

To go back to Mr Ford's letter, I cannot find his idea of "social oppression" very useful.

To me "oppression" necessarily implies a wilful act. I do not believe that society wilfully denies people with disabilities a more equal place. Rather, I think that people are sometimes fearful, ignorant, thoughtless and lacking in perception.

I believe that people who have no contact with disability do not, and sometimes cannot, imagine the frustrating limitations involved in disability. I am also aware that when someone with a disability crosses their path, there are people who shrink into a negative attitude, rather than discover what needs to be done.

For the last 27 years I have deliberately adopted a positive approach when dealing with able bodied people. I have accepted that there are things that I cannot do for myself. Those things I need to persuade other people to do for me. The fact that I need assistance in some things in no way detracts from the many things which I can do for myself.

By adopting a positive attitude, I mean that I ask for help. I



try to request it pleasantly, according dignity to those I ask and anticipating that they will accord me equal dignity. In return, the majority have reciprocated. I have, in the main, had the physical assistance that I have needed—and remarkably little of the "help" I have not wanted.

In the same way, I would rather tackle problems of physical barriers and social ignorance positively—by attempting to convince the public that it is in their own interests to remove the various stumbling blocks.

Certainly, as regards access, there is an easy case to make. If one adds together all those encumbered by shopping or young children, and all who are hampered by the more painful aspects of ageing, one has a large section of the population who finds steps, heavy swing doors and public transport difficult.

Conditions designed to make access and transport easier for people with disabilities would also help all the people listed above. Some of their encumbrances are temporary. Some are not. The trick is to convince the politicians—and voters—that old age, in due course, affects most people.

It is short sighted for anyone to say "There, but for..." The only real difference is that we got here first!

*Valerie Lang is a vice-chairman of The Spastics Society.*

\* This debate has arisen from an assumption made in the Share Your Problems column (DN, June) that people have to "come to terms with athetosis". This was later repudiated in a letter by Carl Ford (DN, August) in which he argued that disability was a social phenomenon brought about by segregation and needs left unmet—in other words, oppression.

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# OUTLOOK ARTS

## The Art of Disability

As someone who enjoys the arts I looked forward to Bradford's first Art of Disability last month, which ran concurrently with The Bradford Festival.

The 12-day programme of exhibitions, seminars and workshops, theatre, poetry, music and dance celebrated the opening of a new accessible arts centre, The Old Quaker School, as well as the creativity of disabled people.

The official opening was by Shape director and DNTV critic, Chris Davies, who spoke about his concern at what he sees as a movement towards "separation between ourselves and the non-disabled mainstream culture", by those advocating a "disability culture".

If a disability culture means a greater sense of unity, self pride and self awareness for disabled people then he is in agreement with it; if it means segregation from mainstream culture, he is not, as that would mean sacrificing the chance to be recognised as an equal by non-disabled people.

Chris Davies said disability



*The Asian band Naya Saaz performed before an enthusiastic crowd outside Bradford City Hall.*

gives a "unique viewpoint of the world"; a viewpoint which could be mirrored in a disability culture.

He drew attention to the sheer volume of artistic endeavour that was on display, including bright, imaginative canvases of patterns, animals and people by Marjorie Niland, and the textured work of Anne Miller, in which human figures are subsumed in the very composition.

There was also a series of portraits of disabled people by Gene Lambert. But I was captivated by an exhibition of photographs by Camerawork called "Visions of the Blind" in which the difficulties faced by blind photographers had been successfully overcome.

Above it all was the model of a brightly painted eagle made of chicken wire, wood and cardboard by the people attending the Grange Crescent day centre.

What contributed to the day, for me, was not just the air of

celebration, but the way everyone seemed involved. This was particularly apparent during the talk by Vic Finklestein, a founder of the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People and the London Disability Arts Forum, in which he advocated the development of a distinct disability culture.

I admired the presentation and some of his ideas about how disabled people can protest against lack of access and facilities at arts venues. But for me he failed to allay the fear, expressed by Chris Davies, that a disability culture might come to exist which is in opposition to mainstream culture, not complementary to it.

In direct contrast to the how and why of disability culture, Peter Street, founder of Chances, an organisation which brings together disabled and able-bodied poets and artists, gave a reading of his poetry. Some of the poems were drawn from his

own life as a forester.

Many are short and ideal for public reading, particularly as they exude Peter's enthusiasm for life. Even when dealing with the pain he has experienced in recent years he can still recognise and communicate the humorous side: a mixture of gas and air saved his life, but what he remembers most is the "high" it gave him.

A sense of humour was also evident in Paul Bura's poetry reading and workshop, which was full of laughter. Paul Bura derives his inspiration not only from the situations he finds himself in but also from those he sees happening to others. Keeping an ear and an eye open to the things going on around one was his basic message to members of the workshop.

Yet again the Quaker School vibrated with an atmosphere of creativity which was fired by this energetic, fun-loving poet. The variety of subjects in his poetry was endless.

I was struck by the honesty of the poems about disability, an honesty which recounted, for example, the frustration of not being able to run to catch a departing train.

Many of the festival's events took place at the Quaker School arts centre which is near the town centre and was built to provide a lively accessible venue for disabled artists and audiences. It has easy access, signers, a textured floor and a tactile map of its layout, as well as providing transport to events. Funding has come from Bradford Council, Bradford Community Arts Association and donations from local charities. Several community arts groups will be based at the centre including the theatre group In-Valid, which organised many of the events.

Although separate from the Bradford Festival, the Art of Disability was able to join forces with it at various points, such as the all-day spectacular in St George's Hall, where the comic performer Jag Phah of Graeae Theatre Company appeared.

The two festivals also met when the Asian band Naya Saaz took part in the day-long open air concert in the town centre. It was clear they were the favourites of many in the audience. I was impressed by their professional performance and the unceasing enthusiasm of the vocalist.



*Peter Street showing work from Chances.*

Naya Saaz's performance epitomises for me the vitality and unity which characterised the events I attended. Although these were only a selection of what was on offer at the Art of Disability, they speak well for an active future for the art of disabled people and for the new arts centre.

**Wendy Robson**  
*Sheltered Placement Coordinator,  
Bradford area,  
The Spastics Society*

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happens. The car seems to relax into a lovely quiet cruise.

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job, it uses a lot less petrol than a conventional automatic. In Government fuel tests it achieved 58.9 mpg at 56 mph.\*

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Ford computed figs. \*Achieved in govt. fuel economy tests - mpg litres per 100 km, constant 56 mph (90 kmh) 58.9 (4.8), constant 75 mph (120 kmh) 40.9 (6.9). Urban driving 39.2 (7.2).



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DNX

# MUSIC

Leaving the office, we pass John Cox, director of The Spastics Society in the corridor. He looks a little stunned.

Out in the street, crowds part, cars hoot, faces show every emotion from astonishment, fear, admiration and jealousy, until, as we near Soho, the pumping heart of trendy London, the looks simply reflect recognition of a fellow exhibitionist. No doubt about it, Bobbi Style is back where he belongs. "Why not pose in a wheelchair?" he asks.

A friend once called him the "Bob Geldof of disability." He may have said it jokingly, but there are similarities between the 2 Bobs.

Like Geldof, Bobbi found in music an outlet for the rebelliousness and creativity of his repressive teenage years. Like Geldof, his love of punk rock, fashion and fun manifested itself as a dislike of authority, red tape and injustice. Unlike the more famous Bob, Bobbi Style happens to have cp.

On his first day at Lord Mayor Treloar College in Hampshire he was given a detention. "At 13, I was the youngest punk rocker in the school, but the most hip as well. At 14 I started going out with girls, drinking and hanging around with some friends from Guildford with hot rods. I was always either gated or suspended and when I got caught coming in at 4 am, I was expelled – but they had to have me back as no-one else would take me.

"The best job anyone offered me when I left (confounding his teachers by getting several O levels) was as a lift boy at Boots. It only had 2 floors, so basically I told them to shove it.

"I always wanted to do what I wanted to do. My parents brought me up to believe in what I did, even if they disagreed with it. In fact I got no support trying to become a pop singer – they wanted me behind a desk. I was the wild black sheep of the family and always will be. I love it, and they love me because of it."

Bobbi's first band, Bobbi and the Wild Cats, spent 6 months in Paris playing in a jazz club owned by their French guitarist's father.

"We had a whale of a time and earned a fortune doing Stray Cats-type rockabilly with a punk twist, and because we were English, the kids went crazy. It was the first time I'd ever been screamed at by girls and I thought 'I like this!' I mean, sex is good, but there is one hell of a buzz from being up on stage."

Bobbi's flamboyant dress and music has not exactly hampered his ability to attract the girls. "I like women, women like me," he says. "I'm not saying you have to dress like me – you don't have to wear leather to get laid, but if you have some pride and make an effort with your appearance, then people will respect you and think, well maybe he's not so bad."

"It also helps that he is a very good looking and confident guy. "I get the girls because I go up to them and say 'hi', not sit around feeling sorry for myself. If you sit there with 10 days growth on your face and a beergut, nobody's going to respect you."

Returning from Paris, the band decided to hit the nearest town with a TV and radio station. Coming from Exeter, they ended

# Rebel with a cause

Will he be pop's first disabled megastar sex-symbol? Julian Marshall sees no reason why not after a night out on the tiles with Bobbi Style



Joe Ashworth

*Bobbi Style: all dressed-up with somewhere to go.*

up in Plymouth. "We arrived thinking the world was our oyster. After 2 months of boredom, we were broke and had no drive to do anything. One member got married and the French bloke went home. I've been stuck in Plymouth ever since, struggling with various bands."

Since Paris, Bobbi's music has acquired a slicker, more commercial sound, with chugging Cult-style guitars and a Dead or Alive beat. After several sessions in a studio, always running out of money before completing enough material to approach a record company (studio time can cost £200 a day), Bobbi "lucked-out" when the mother of one of the members of his last band, Flex the Sex, financed a single, Embrace.

After some local media attention, the band broke up due to "artistic differences", and Bobbi, now 23, is going it alone with a new manager.

He has recently sought sponsorship for a single from Everest and Jennings, manufacturer of his £3,500 magnesium-wheeled Wayfarer wheelchair. He paid the deposit on it by selling his Hi-Fi.

Whoever helps finance it, the next single will be "Throne of Passion", based on an experience he had in a pub when someone accused him of using the wheelchair as a gimmick. "It raises a few points I want to make such as don't feel sorry for me, and get up and have a go – and you can dance to it."

By this stage, the interview is over; we've argued over the last slice of Pizza Hut (result: a draw) and its 11.30 pm – club time. Our destination is Limelight, the hip London club with branches in New York and Chicago.

"A friend of mine who was in Michael Jackson's *Thriller* re-

bouncers have always been great – can't do enough."

The 19-stone Wayfarer is carried up the steps, and after a few scoots across the dance floor and some robotics dancing, it's parked and Bobbi is carried upstairs to the lounge.

Is this normal behaviour for a nightclub? "In Plymouth, no. There's only a couple of clubs that let me in, and most people are too narrow-minded to come up and talk. But I've never had problems in London."

"Disabled people have as much right to a good time as anyone else," said Rose Turner, the Limelight manageress.

When Bobbi was thinking of having a party there, they offered to ramp the place for any friends in wheelchairs, and when "Throne of Passion" goes ahead, the premises have been offered for use in a video.

But do not expect to just turn up and be admitted. Mr Style gets in by the same criteria as anyone else: dress sense and personality. He wishes more people would dress how *they* want to, and not as their mum tells them.

Ex-punk, ex-rockabilly, the man with more ex's than a Soho cinema is already thinking of the next 10 years. "I want to dip my fingers into everything – movies, producing – I can change my image every few months, so watch out David Bowie."

"I'm also going to embarrass a few people once I'm in the public eye. I've got nobody to answer to. There's nobody pulling my strings so they can't shut me up. Disabled people have had their opportunities for socialising taken away, their sex life – everything. By the time I'm finished, there's not going to be anywhere we can't go."

But Bobbi Style's most important contribution has already been made, whatever he achieves in the future, in showing that disabled people can be cool and sexy. I know – I saw it.



## Tricky subject well-handled

Mental disability is a tricky subject for television, more likely to be treated badly than physical disability, so it is good to be able to report a programme that got it right.

In one of a series looking at people who are considered *Socially Unacceptable* (C4, 2 September), Ray Gosling talked to mentally handicapped people about their thoughts on leaving mental hospitals and going into community care. No matter who he is addressing, Ray does not interview people; he talks gently to them. He reproached society for continuing to shut people away, also gently. He is a real humanitaian, who feels for the people he champions. It may have been a slightly oversimplified case, but better this than one against community care.

**Equinox: Prisoner of Consciousness** (C4, 17 September), a repeat from last year, looked at another form of mental handicap. Clive Wearing has a type of amnesia brought on by a virus, which stops him remembering anything beyond 25 seconds. If his wife is out of sight for longer than 3 minutes her return becomes an emotional reunion, as if she had been away for 50 years!

One factor in Clive's life defies this incredible disability – music. He plays the organ, sings and conducts choirs, and the music will carry him through the 25 second barrier, until it stops – then all is forgotten.

With the subtle persuasion and assistance of Jonathan Miller, both the audience and the Wearings acquired a greater understanding of what was wrong. Fascinating and bewildering, I felt, for both Clive and his wife.

Another Clive was prominent this month. Clive Jermain was the author of *The Best Years of Your Life* (BBC2, 2 September) and the subject of *Clive Jermain: The Best Years* (BBC2, 3 September). The documentary about him helped me understand how he could have written a play, but not much else. The play itself, unlike Clive, was very negative both about his own illness and in general. Granted, he knows more about cancer than most of us, so the play carries authority, but it is treated extremely sentimentally and emotively, and anyone who had just been diagnosed would scarcely find encouragement. Nevertheless, Clive is still writing, and that's the main thing.

**Link** (ITV, every Sunday) has changed. Reduced from half-an-hour, I was ready for the worst – especially with no Rosalie Wilkins, after 12 pioneering years. I doubted if a quarter-of-an-hour each week would suffice.

I should have trusted Kevin Mulhern's judgement better. **Link** is still the best programme on disability on television. The difference now is that its power is more concentrated and so has more impact.

The difference between **Link** and any other programme is that it is *our* voice, speaking to us with no concessions to any other viewer. Everyone can see it, and no one has an excuse not to.

Chris Davies

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DN 10

# book

## Gideon Ahoy!

by William Mayne  
(Viking Kestrel, paperback £4.50)

"Gideon waking in the next room with a shout, his morning shout.

"He can't tell he does that, thought Eva coming out of sleep herself, in the next room, opening a silent eye. Does that, she wondered, make a great noise for someone? Am I deaf to light like Gideon is deaf to sound?"

For three decades now William Mayne has been one of this country's most prolific, innovative and highly-regarded writers of fiction for young people. His style may infuriate as many people as it delights, but no one can deny the extraordinary breadth and power of his imagination.

*Gideon Ahoy!* is about a 17-year-old boy who has been deaf and brain-damaged since early childhood. He communicates his desires and emotions through a variety of howls such as "hoonph", "hyagh" and "booley" that only his family – in particular his mum and sister Evie – can comprehend.

The main action of the novel concerns what happens when Gideon starts his first job, working on a canal boat. At first all goes well, but then Gideon is involved in a terrible accident which results in him losing two fingers. At the end of the tourist season, he also loses his job – with dramatic consequences.

Gideon himself is based on a mentally retarded youth from

William Mayne's own Yorkshire village "who three or four years ago we thought was dying of melancholy. It's not a sociological book – I hope nobody thinks that this is the sort of book I think should be written. It's purely concerned with my observations – imaginative rather than fanciful perhaps."

If the story itself is rather fanciful and not entirely convincing – though very readable, the portrayal of Gideon and his family is full of insight and warmth and there are several passages of great beauty.

It's a book that ought to find its way onto the shelves of all school libraries.

Alan Durant

## The Language for Ben: A deaf child's right to sign

by Lorraine Fletcher  
(Souvenir Press, £9.95 hardback, £6.95 paperback)

This is an important book. For parents, professionals in education, deaf people – all those concerned with and about education for deaf children – it should be essential reading.

Its greatest strength is the fact that it has been written by a professional, but placed on the other side of the fence because she produced a child deemed to be an oddity in our society. The struggles that Lorraine and her husband, Ray, had in obtaining basic information and acquiring the services they thought Ben should have are an object lesson to those who think parents have choices. It is clear there is very little choice of schooling offered to parents of deaf children, never mind in what language.

This book proposes that the deaf child should have the right to be bilingual, with British Sign Language as a first language, and English as second. That right is

now established in Sweden, but not here in Britain. This may seem incredible to those unfamiliar with education for the deaf, but parents do not actually have the right to choose which language their deaf child can be taught in.

The book is written in two parts. The first is a narrative, the second extracts from a diary. As might be expected, the extracts are more compelling since they record immediate feelings. Both parts are, however, easy to read as it is written in the first person and the present tense throughout.

It is the first book that came close to helping me to understand why many parents find life with a deaf child almost too much to bear. As a deaf person, I have always found this hard to understand as I had hearing parents who loved me.

The harsh truth is that having a deaf child sometimes means having to face up to the rest of the world (including professionals who should be on your side) for what you believe in, and having the guts to stick to it.

The book confirmed my belief that education for the deaf is much too important to be left to the experts.

Paul Redfern

## Look out for ...

Paul Mason, *The Cutting Edge* is an exhibition of sculpture at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Litchfield Street, Wolverhampton, 10 October-7 November. Paul Mason works primarily in stone and marble and draws his inspiration from landscape and natural forms. You can touch and explore the shapes and textures. Paul Mason will also be running a workshop on Friday 30 October. Groups for this should book with Alison Cox, tel: (0902) 312032.

microtechnology...microtechnology

## User friendly conference

At the Special Needs User Group (SNUG) Conference in Liverpool last month, many of the talks on particular devices or computer programs had a commercial bias.

Sometimes, too, they were presented jointly by a company and a user. This is an increasing trend in special needs applications and to me a welcome one: so much depends upon the personal commitment of individuals who make their work available at only a modest cost. Delegates saw comprehensive demonstrations and had the opportunity to talk to a user from their own profession.

In these days of expensive, up-market conferences, the £6 fee (with lunch) was amazing value.

*Special Needs Computing: the Journal*, published by SNUG, will be appearing shortly. If it perpetuates the down-to-earth philosophy of the conference, then don't miss it.

Alongside the conference was a comprehensive exhibition of commercial products and examples of work undertaken by local schools and colleges.

R & D Speech Technology, winners of the Datasolve Award for Technological Innovation (see DN July '87), were demonstrating the Micro-Voice speech recognition system and *Speech-Writer*, the wordprocessor program controlled entirely by 10 spoken commands.

The *Speech-Writer* package was remarkably effective despite the noisy exhibition hall. It is now available for the BBC B micro (£344) and BBC Master (£245). The price of the Micro-Voice has risen from £149 to

£199 since the award, apparently because of low volume sales.

**Elfin Systems** were showing 3 recent additions to their range of products to assist users of the BBC Master who find the normal keyboard difficult.

**UNIKEY** (£40) is a plug-in chip that allows special features on the keyboard. It will minimise inadvertent key presses due to tremor or finger slip and provide sequential operation of the shift key for "one finger" typists.

The software is fully compatible with the built-in software supplied in the Master and is estimated to be usable with 90 per cent of other programs.

**The One Handed Keyboard Adaptor** (£60) is a small circuit board which provides sequential operation for shift and control keys. It is claimed to be compatible with all programs.

**VIEW ANTICS** (£60) has been written to complement the **VIEW** wordprocessor for BBC B and Master microcomputers. It will probably find widest acceptance among users of keyboard emulators since it offers word anticipation (based on the letters already typed and extracted from the user's personal vocabulary) and other intelligent routines to increase typing speed.

Peter Watts

**Special Needs User Group**, 39 Eccleston Gardens, St. Helens WA10 3BJ.

**R & D Speech Technology Ltd**, Waterside House, Ponsharden, Penryn, Cornwall TR10 8AR, tel: 0326 75290.

**Elfin Systems Ltd**, Byard Road, Gloucester GL2 6DF.

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# Cold weather, hot fashion

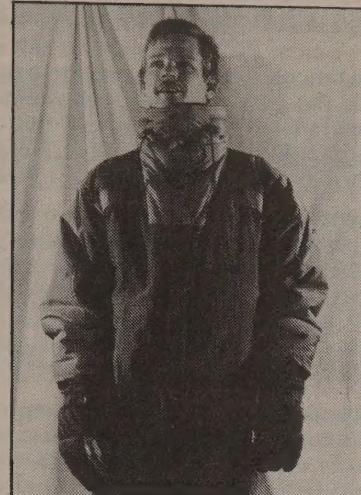
Ski-wear is the answer to keeping warm, says Ginny Jenkins

Being able to keep warm in cold weather is the number one priority for both skiers and people with disabilities, so modern ski-wear can be the ideal solution. It is also fun and easy to find, as these clothes from the ski range at C&A prove.

Wind chill is a hazard for skiers and people in wheelchairs. It happens when cold air touches a fast moving person or when a cold wind meets someone moving slowly. Ski outfits are made in lightweight fabric that has a high resistance to wind chill.

Wearing trousers is an obvious way of keeping warm, especially if worn with "long Johns" and long socks underneath.

People who are constantly sitting often find that a chilly "half moon" gap occurs between their trousers and their top. The latest action ski trousers for men and women are the first slim-fit trousers to appear in ordinary stores which are cut higher at the back of the waist and prevent this



*Skiing or watching football? Blue and green jacket, sizes 30-42, £39.99 and salopettes, 36-42, £39.99. Gloves S,M,L, £17.99. Other colours too.*

problem. Padded ski salopettes and elasticated waist trousers also help. Ski salopettes and trousers usually have easy-to-fasten elasticated braces to keep

them up.

Head gear is a must for keeping warm. Twenty per cent of all body heat is lost through an uncovered head, so it is wise to wear a hat, even indoors.

Hands and feet are often where people feel coldest. Gloves and warm socks are essential and 2 pairs (a thinner pair worn under thicker ones) are even more effective.

Long underpants and long sleeved vests will also help hands and feet: the most effective way to keep the extremities warm is to warm the whole body.

Ski-wear is colourful, easy to put on, lightweight and a pleasure to wear. If it seems a bit pricey, look for reductions on last season's ranges, still in the stores, or buy this season's clothes at bargain prices in the winter sales. Remember, too, ski-wear makes wonderful presents.

*Ginny Jenkins MCSP is Clothing Adviser at the Disabled Living Foundation.*



*Glittering lurex thermal gloves complete this eye-catching outfit: pink jacket £39.99, matching trousers with elasticated waist £39.99, black snood £2.99, white boots £25.*



*Amanda liked this outfit - lightweight black blouson top with shoulder patterning, tight black action-pants, black ear muffs. "It's really sophisticated", she said, "and the bigger fastenings are easy to use." Top £69.99, pants £39.99, ear muffs £2.99. All the clothes are from C & A.*



*Andrew (above) in an easy-to-put-on jacket with dolman sleeves, £45, salopettes £39.99 and apres-ski boots which he says don't slip on wet surfaces, £17.99.*

*In the pink: Amanda (above right) wears a striped thermal vest, £9.99, Long Johns, £9.99 and long socks £2.99. Various colours available.*

*That hat again (right) teamed with a black and white short length jumper, £12.99 and the pink ski pants.*



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It's simple to set up—full instructions are sent with every order but all it involves is placing the right side of the amplifier against the earpiece of the telephone earset!

At just £9.95 the "Loudmouth" is extremely good value. It's also extremely useful too.

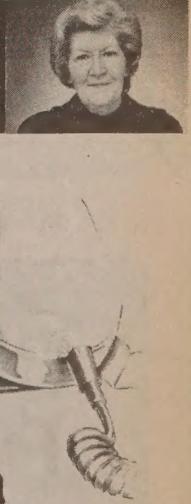
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# Share Your Problems

With Margaret Morgan

## Homosexuality and disability – a “double stigma”

An important stage in growing up into full adulthood is personal recognition of one's own sexual orientation.

Most boys and girls in their early teens go through a “homosexual” phase and are more attracted to people of their own sex. The majority then move on to a heterosexual orientation and “straight” relationships.

It is reckoned that about 10 per cent of the population have homosexual or lesbian tendencies. Some recognise this early, others later in life. Some feel able to “come out”, others have great difficulty in finding outlets for the expression of their lesbian or gay inclinations.

For those who have disabilities the problems can be even more difficult and many feel that they have a double stigma, as the following contributions show.

The first comes from a paper written by a young woman with a disability who attended the SPOD conference in July. It was read for her.

**I am a young disabled lesbian and I am present at this conference but am unable to read out this particular paper due to the possibility of physical and mental violence, which the views could – and would – produce.**

I left “special” school 3 years ago, being fully aware that to stay would mean continuous denial of my sexuality, both to myself and to those who were, in theory, “educating” me. The education was totally heterosexual,

the only mention of lesbianism being when a young woman in the same form was threatened with expulsion as a result of her sexuality.

After leaving school I went to a college which was for people – not only young – with my disability and it was here that I “came out”. Immediately I became an outcast, although there was a gay man on the same course who was, presumably, “acceptable”. I left soon afterwards.

**Due to my disability, access to material concerning my sexuality had been limited. I felt totally unable to ask for my social worker's assistance in locating accessible lesbian groups and literature after hearing her telling “jokes” to a person in the same office about gay men and lesbians.**

**I had problems with my family, too, and a relative remarked that he didn't want a perverted niece. He asked me, “How can you be queer and disabled?”...**

**Many of those working with us make assumptions: we are young and disabled, so presumably we are unable to experience emotion, especially if it is geared towards a person of the same sex. Able-bodied people live their lives as they wish.**

**Please help and allow us, as young disabled lesbians, to live ours.**

The second comment was from a reader who thought that *Disability Now* emphasises “straight” relationships, with the implication that all people with disabilities are naturally heterosexual. When asked to write to *Disability Now* about this, the person who made the criticism did not feel able to identify himself publicly.

Several very important issues arise from these contributions and they concern stereotyping as well as stigma.

There is still quite a wide-



Simon Crompton

spread view that people with disabilities must either remain as “innocents”, in other words, children, all their lives or that they must conform to a higher standard of behaviour than anyone else. This results in decisions being made about not including certain topics in school curricula or about withholding information in case hopes might be raised or vulnerable children led astray.

As our first contributor points out, many young people with disabilities do not have free access to the information or contacts that are available to other boys and girls. It is even more important, therefore, that they should know about different life styles and be able to make informed choices for themselves.

In fact, many adults who have lived in “institutions” have been forced into one-sex lives, with their heterosexual inclinations and needs totally denied.

It is, of course, particularly difficult to help people with severe learning disabilities to find their own level and parents, teachers and carers need a great deal of sensitivity and understanding. It is all too easy to make assumptions or to lead immature boys and girls in one direction or another.

The present legal position does not make things any easier and carers – and parents – are very vulnerable. The dividing line between helping young people to be fulfilled and taking advantage of, or abusing, them is a very fine one.

It is important to remember, too, that one can never discount the influence of the personal needs and feelings of the carer, teacher or parent.

The spread of the AIDS virus has complicated the situation and added to the double stigma of being gay or lesbian and disabled. It would, however, be very sad if nobody with a disability felt that they could acknowledge their sex orientation openly, even in situations like the SPOD conference, where understanding and empathy are evident.

Several organisations offer companionship, information and support to gays and lesbians with a disability and SPOD may well be able to suggest people with whom one can talk things over in strict confidence. Morgan Williams, the director of SPOD, tells me that the number of enquiries from, or on behalf of, gays or lesbians with disabilities is very small and much lower than the estimated national average.

Do contact one of these organisations if you would like further information or contacts.

**GEMMA, BM Box 5700, London WC1N 3XX. A national organisation of lesbians, with or without disabilities.**

**Gay Men's Disabled Group, c/o Gay's the Word Bookshop, 66 Marchmont St, London WC1.**

**Campaign for Homosexual Equality, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1N 3XX.**

**SPOD (The Association to aid the Sexual and Personal Relationships of People with a Disability) 286 Camden Road, London N7. Tel: 01-607 8851.**

# What's On

## Conferences and leisure

**Welfare – Not Warfare, Not Warfare** is the theme of Time Off for Women, 21-25 October. Its aim is to press governments to count all women's unwaged work, including the work of disability and health, in the GNP. Women with disabilities will join others for activities including Speakout, Anti-Cruise Convoy to Greenham. Further information from WinVisible, King's Cross Woman's Centre, 71 Tonbridge Street, London WC1H 9DZ. Tel: 01-837 7509.

**Additional Requirements Take-Up and Tactics Before April 1988** is a seminar on 27 October on the urgent need for take-up before the introduction of Income Support, arrangements for transitional protection, and the various additional requirements. It takes place at Central Library, 2 Fieldway Crescent, London N5 and costs £35. Bookings to Administrative/Campaign Worker, Disability Alliance ERA, 25 Denmark St, London WC2H 8NQ. Tel: 01-379 6142.

**Professional Practice & Images of Disability** is a conference on 28 October at Sheffield University, and the inaugural meeting of the Institute for the Study of Disability and Society. It will look at service planning and explore how professional expectations influence the experience of people with disabilities in all aspects of their lives. The course fee is £30. Further information from ISDS, 15 Grantchester Street, Cambridge CB3 9HY. Tel: (0223) 357597.

**The Use of Computerised Equipment with Disabled People** is a talk by Roger Jefcoate on 29 October, 11am-12.30pm at Room 115 – 1st Floor, Social Services Department, 40 Cumberland Road, Wood Green, London N22. Open to anyone who is interested. Details from Norma Williams, Senior Occupational Therapist, Social Services Centre, Area 5, 87 Muswell Hill Broadway, London N10. Tel: 01-444 7271.

**Therapy in Music for Handicapped Children** is a weekend course on 7-8 November at The Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy Centre for teachers, parents and others interested in working with handicapped children. For further details contact The Secretary, The Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre, 3 Leighton Place, London NW5 2QL. Tel: 01-267 6296.

**Cerebral Palsy & Allied Disorders in Young Children** is a course at the Cheyne Centre for Spastic Children from 16-20 November. Among the subjects covered will be deafness in childhood, epilepsy, communication disorders and orthopaedic surgery. For paediatricians, paediatric registrars, community doctors and GPs. Further details from Course Administrator, Cheyne Centre for Spastic Children, 61 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, London SW3 5LX. Tel: 01-352 8434.

**Living With Disability** is a practical day course on 19 November at Cleator Moor Civic Centre. It will include fashion for disabled people, simple home-made playthings, aids to communication in education, and technology at home, school and work. Fees are £8 professionals, £6 voluntary workers, disabled people. Further details from Christine Hill, Howgill Centre, 14-15 Howgill Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 7QW. Tel: (0946) 62681.

**Study Day for Parents of Children with Cerebral Palsy** on 23 November at Guy's Hospital, London. The fee is £6. Information from Diana Patterson, Medical Education and Information Unit, Newcomen Centre, Guy's Hospital, London SE1 9RT. Tel: 01-407 7600.

**The British Computer Society – Disabled Specialist Group** in co-operation with The Shaftesbury Society 3rd Annual Conference re-convened for 25 November at CEGB, Sudbury House, Newgate Street, London EC1. For further information tel: (0245) 73331 ext 3915.

## Courses at Castle Priory

**Feet, Legs and Balance – Aspects of Treatment and Care of Children with Cerebral Palsy** – course tutor Hans de Rijke, Superintendent Physiotherapist, Trengweth School for Children with CP, Plymouth. Of particular relevance to doctors, physiotherapists and their accompanying helpers from assessment centres, clinics or schools. 2-3 November. Tuition £50 (does not include material), residence £28.15, non-residence £17.

**Young Children with Severe Learning Problems** – for health visitors, home teachers and pre-school counsellors and others providing services for children with profound difficulties. 11-13 November. Tuition £50, residence £47, non-residence £17.

**Providing for Elderly People who have Additional Special Needs** for those interested in the needs of older people with disabilities. 16-18 November. Tuition £50, residence £47, non-residence £17.

**Behavioural Difficulties in Children with Special Needs** – a workshop on behaviour modification, observation techniques and goal planning, based on the work of Malcolm Jones at Beech Tree School. 23-25 November. Tuition £50, residence £47, non-residence £17.

**Perception – a hidden handicap?** – for teachers, therapists and carers involved in helping children cope with the effects of cerebral palsy, spina bifida, general learning difficulties and non-specific handicaps. Tutor: Pat Kennedy. 30 November-1 December. Tuition £50, residence £28.15, non-residence £17.

**The Child with CP in School** – for staff of any discipline from either special or mainstream schools. Course to include: background; pre-school years; curriculum; skills; communication and leisure. 4-6 December. Tuition £54, residence £48, non-residence £18.

**Derbyshire Language Scheme** – Places strictly limited so that maximum individual help can be possible. 7-9 December. Tuition £125 (including materials), residence £51.70, non-residence £21.70.

**For more information write to Castle Priory College, Thames Street, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 0HE. Tel: (0491) 37551.**

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**PHOENIX** the quarterly magazine of disability literature. £1 sample copy. Guide to periodicals in the disability field. New international edition £6.95 (post paid). From Phoenix, 10 Woad Lane, Grimsby DN37 9NH.

**BEC 40 Wheelchair** with kerb climber. RH control. Colour blue. 2 yrs old, as new £550. Mrs Randall. Tel: (0709) 864888.

**VESSA TREKKA** battery powered car (with handbook). Hardly used. Cost £1,895. Accept £1,000 ono. Tel: Morley (0532) 522895.

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We are seeking a disabled person for this post. The person appointed will have some experience of operating micro computers and associated software. Word processing skills would be an advantage. He/she should have a pleasant personality and the ability to communicate well both on an individual and a group basis.

It is anticipated that the successful candidate will take up post in November 1987.

For further details of the post and an informal discussion, please contact either John Langan or Sue Yates - telephone: 01-390 1111, Ext 247/239.

Salary Scale: £7274 to £9280 per annum inclusive. Pay award pending.

Application form and job description from District Personnel Department, 17 Upper Brighton Road, Surbiton, Surrey. Tel: 01-390 1111, Ext 254. Closing Date: 23 October 1987.

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Circle 33 is a community based inner-city housing association working in six London boroughs.

The Haringey/Waltham Forest team is looking for someone to carry out the administrative functions of the housing management group. Some knowledge of housing association work would be an advantage. The successful applicant should have at least 18 months' administrative/clerical experience and should be able to work on his/her own initiative. The applicant should also be able to type accurately and acquire some knowledge of having used a word processor and a computer.

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For application form and further details, please contact:

Miranda Armantrading  
255 High Road  
London N15 5BT Tel: 802 0961

Circle 33 is an equal opportunities employer and therefore welcomes applications from all. We will not discriminate on grounds of race, sex, creed or sexual orientation and we have a positive attitude towards the employment of people with disabilities.

Closing date: 16th October 1987

33

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### Wanted

**SPECIALIST BESPOKE TAILOR** to make trousers sought by disabled man (prominent right hip, stiff left leg) within 50 miles of London. Write to Box No 166, Disability Now, address on page 16 (marking envelopes Private & Confidential).

**QUALIFIED PREPARATORY SCHOOL TEACHER** with training in physical and special education for neurally handicapped pupils, seeks position in the UK. For further information please contact Mrs Elma Day, 404 York Gardens, Main Road, Rosebank, Cape 7700, South Africa.

### Find-A-Friend

**MAN** with disability, early forties, with elderly mother, wishes to contact lady, also disabled, in the Leicestershire area. Preferably a single person with an invalid car. Interests are Country & Western music and driving in the country. Please write to Box No 168, Disability Now, (marking envelopes Private & Confidential).

**MAN** disabled with CP, mid-30s, living in London, would like to correspond with female, 26-36, with view to meeting and something more serious. Interests: dining out, sightseeing, listening to music, sports, and many others. Please write to Box No 167, Disability Now, (marking envelopes Private & Confidential).

**CP MAN** with speech disorder would like to contact an able-bodied lady of 20-50 to correspond with. Must have understanding of CP. Please write to Box No 170, Disability Now, (marking envelopes Private & Confidential).



LET US TRY AND HELP YOU FIND A PENFRIEND, FRIEND OR PARTNER

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The Wellington Centre  
52 Chevalier Street  
Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2PB

**WIDOW**, 59-year old with arthritis. Car driver. Quiet cheerful, would like to write to male up to 64, also car driver. Nottingham/Leicester area. Please write to Box No 170, Disability Now, (marking envelopes Private & Confidential).

**ACTIVE, MOBILE** but slightly disabled gent, 40, bachelor with own flat, would like to correspond with an able-bodied or disabled lady 25 to 45 years. View friendship, and hopefully eventual meeting. Very varied interests. Please write to Box No 169, Disability Now, (marking envelopes Private & Confidential).

### Holidays

**THORNBURY HALL HOTEL**, Churnet Valley. Specialised facilities for all disabilities. Companion service available (no extra cost) to allow all the family to enjoy themselves. Conference facilities and study/craft courses available on request. Colour TV in all bedrooms, single rooms available. Games room. Hotel stands in 5 acres of ground amidst beautiful countryside. Prices from £21.50 a day full board. For a brochure contact Thornbury Hall Hotel, Lockwood Road, Kingsley Holt, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs ST10 2DH. Tel: (0538) 757220.

**THE CALVERT TRUST ADVENTURE CENTRE** at Keswick is offering beginners courses in b/w photography, water colour painting, expressive artwork, bird watching and ornithology. For further details contact The Calvert Trust Adventure Centre, Little Crosthwaite, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 4QD. Tel: (0596) 72254.

### Situations Vacant

**THERAPIST** required for a 5 year-old CP boy. Non-smoker. Should be willing to live with family in Pakistan and travel abroad with them. Contract for at least one year. Accommodation provided, good salary. Tel: 01-642 6519.

**DEMONSTRATOR**. Toys for the Handicapped would like to hear from anyone in Scotland, preferably in the Glasgow/Edinburgh area, who might be interested in working part-time for TFH demonstrating the TFH range of products to special schools, hospitals and other organisations. Approach Mr. H. D. Baer, Toys for the Handicapped, 76 Barracks Road, Sandy Lane Industrial Estate, Stourport-On-Severn, Worcs. DY13 9QB. Tel: 0299 827820.

**Correction:** Bill Huddleston, Executive Council candidate, was chairman of the Cleveland Group. Andrew Berry, another candidate, is treasurer of the Milton Keynes and District Spastics Society and a member of the Milton Keynes Council of Disabled People.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Adventurers Wanted** for the Ron Moore Wilderness Trek. Applications are invited from people with a disability to join a team of 12 adventurers who will fly to the Boundary Waters on the USA/Canada border for 3 weeks canoeing and camping in the wilderness in August 1988. For further details please send SAE before November '87 to Flok de Rijke, Senior Physiotherapist, Trengweth School, Hartley Road, Plymouth, Devon PL3 5LP.

**Project Phoenix Trust**, the charity which runs overseas study tours for people with disabilities, has announced its programme for 1988. In April the destination is Rome and Pompeii, and in September either Tunisia or Vienna. Contact Valerie Saunders as soon as possible for an application form and further details. Project Phoenix Trust, 68 Rochfords, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes MK6 5DJ. Tel: (0908) 678038.

**Writing as a Therapy** by John Tinsley is a booklet for people with disabilities who have ever felt the desire to take up writing. It offers encouragement and includes advice on research, building characters in fiction, and how to find a market. John Tinsley himself has cerebral palsy. He had edited a small magazine, written for a local newspaper and recently completed his autobiography. For a copy of the booklet send a SAE to John Tinsley, St Cuthbert's Hospital, Hurworth Place, Darlington.

## PEOPLE

### OBITUARY

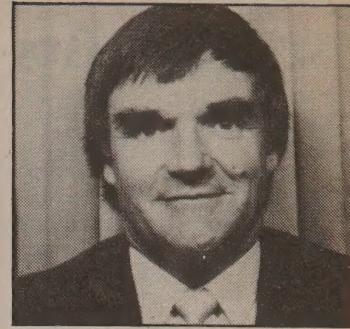
The Arts Council's first Arts and Disability Officer, **Margrethe de Neergaard**, died on 23 August aged 34 following a long illness.

Margrethe set up the Council's Arts and Mobility Monitoring Group last December. "Margrethe constantly displayed remarkable courage, determination and a keen sense of humour in spite of her considerable suffering," said Arts Council secretary-general Luke Rittner. "She will be much missed but we shall continue the important work she began."

Margrethe trained as an archaeologist in Canada and also had degrees in music. She worked on digs all over the world. Before joining the Arts Council, she worked as Finds Supervisor at the Museum of London, and was a founder member of the Museums and Galleries Disability Association.

A trust is being established in Margrethe's name to enable young disabled people to pursue a career in arts administration.

**Contributions to:** Abbey National, Market Square, Aylesbury, Bucks.



The Royal National Institute for the Deaf appointed **Doug Alker**, who is profoundly deaf, as its director of community services. It is the first time a director's position in a major deaf organisation has been filled by a profoundly deaf person.

He will be responsible for the efficient running of the institute's community services throughout Britain, working closely with their principal regional officers.

Doug Alker has been active in the deaf world for 30 years. He was the first deaf person in Britain to qualify as a football coach and his life-long hobby has been as a magician/comedian in a semi-professional double act. He has also encouraged deaf awareness in trade unions.



**Don Allum**, a maintenance man at The Spastics Society's advertising agency DMB&B, arrived safely in Ireland last month, becoming the first man to single-handedly row the Atlantic "both ways". He set out from Newfoundland on 21 June on the West-East leg wearing a Spastics Society T-shirt and wore it again when he arrived to publicise the Society. Pictured with him in front of his boat, QEIII, is **Gwyneth Boatman** (honesty), a secretary at DMB&B. She and her colleagues raised £334 in a day outside the office in St James Square, London, to go with the £1000 cheque Don handed-over to the Society earlier in the day.

### ONE COMPLETED COUPON AND DISABILITY NOW IS ANYONE'S

Disability Now is the newspaper for disabled people. It will also interest parents, carers and professionals in the disability field. And it's free!

Every month it brings you:

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## New GCSE guidelines for students

The National Bureau for Handicapped Students have collaborated with the 6 GCSE examining boards to produce comprehensive guidance notes explaining arrangements for candidates whose disability is likely to handicap them in GCSE examinations.

Following serious concern among teachers, students and parents at the original proposals put forward by the examining groups last year, the NBHS coordinated a working party to produce the new notes, described by Richard Stowell, director of the NBHS as "practical and reassuring."

They are designed to compensate for limitations imposed by a disability, but not otherwise advantage the student.

They include the principles on which special arrangements will be based, choice of syllabus, time allowances and the effects of fatigue on physically disabled candidates.

Because there is an increased emphasis on continuous assessment in the GCSE syllabus, the guidelines also cover work and practicals.

It is the first time students have had unified national guidelines. Under the 'O' level system, each examining board had its own set of regulations.

An advisory committee of examining group representatives and professionals acquainted with the needs of disabled students has been set up to meet at least once a year in the Autumn.

The committee will monitor the GCSE, draw the attention of

## Amnesia society is one year old

A reshaping last month of Channel 4's *Prisoner of Consciousness* about Clive Wearing marked the first anniversary of The Amnesia Association (AMNASS), formed as a result of the film by relatives of people with amnesia and psychologists.

The charity aims to help amnesic people and their families, fund research into the



Clive Wearing talks to presenter Jonathan Miller.

causes, diagnosis and management of amnesia and spread information about the disability. So far one local support group has been formed in Manchester and more are planned.

AMNASS is now conducting a survey with NW Thames Health Authority to find out how many amnesics there are. No one knows, and until they do, AMNASS cannot effectively lobby the Government for research funds and the provision of appropriate long-term care facilities.

At present most amnesics are either stuck in hospitals and psycho-geriatric units or sent home, often imposing great stress on their families.

A video setting out the AMNASS case is being sponsored



**Bridge ahoy!** The Duchess of York took the helm of the Jubilee Sailing Trust's flagship Lord Nelson, designed for mixed disabled/able-bodied crews, as she sailed up the Thames from Greenwich to London Bridge last month to launch a £1.5 million appeal.

examining boards to technological innovations affecting study by students with special needs and recommend revisions to the guidelines.

"The boards' original proposals were inadequate," said Sylvia Simmons, NBHS development officer. "Their principles were too narrow and there was a total lack of understanding of the various needs of various disabilities."

She said the Warnock Committee found that one fifth of children could at some stage in their school career have a special education need and added that the number of disabled people taking exams is increasing due to rising expectations and new technology.

*The guidance notes are available from any of the GCSE examining boards.*

## Parents lose fight for paediatrician

Parents in West Yorkshire lost their battle for another consultant for their disabled children, when Leeds Western Health Authority voted 8 to 6 against the appointment last month.

Anxious parents had formed an action group to campaign for another consultant when Dr Jane Wynne, the only child development specialist in the district, was forced to cancel her appointments for disabled children because of overwork. She had been instructed to concentrate on child sex abuse cases.

But the group says the fight is not over yet. The health authority's general manager has been instructed to prepare a report on all the paediatric services in the district for its next meeting, on 20 October. Parents are hoping to change the minds of authority members before then.

"I think some of them think one doctor is just the same as another," said Alison Forster, whose daughter Rebecca was one of Dr Wynne's patients. "They don't understand that handicapped children need a community paediatrician, not just outpatient appointments."

Dr Wynne was awarded the 1987 Meiring Award by the National Association of Nursery and Family Care, for her work with children, last month.

## Disability Now

Published by The Spastics Society, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ. Tel: 01-636 5020.

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Advertising Jonathan Wine, Kingslea Press Ltd., The Hop Exchange, 24 Southwark Street, London SE1 1TY. Tel: 01-403 3115.  
Typesetting by FMT Graphics Ltd., 182 Union Street, London SE1.

Printed by Portobello Web Press, Littlehampton and 108 Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, London EC4. Tel: 01-583 3190.

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## New support network for parents of deafened children

A national support network for parents of deafened children was launched last month, after a report claimed that doctors are failing to make early diagnosis of deafness caused by childhood illness.

The Share-a-Care network, run by the National Deaf Children's Society, aims to put families in touch with others who have experienced the same problems. It is estimated that there are over 3,000 deafened children in Britain.

The society has also written to the Health Minister, Tony Newton, asking him to encourage doctors to set up a code of practice to screen for hearing loss after illnesses such as mumps, measles and meningitis, which can cause deafness.

Hundreds of parents answered the society's appeal for information, and the resulting report finds they are "isolated and disorientated".

The most alarming message from the parents was the difficult-

ty they had in getting their child's hearing loss diagnosed. A series of "harrowing" case histories illustrate the problem.

One parent from Scotland, whose son went deaf after having mumps and a brain virus, said it took 3 years for anyone to take her worries seriously. "My own GP thought I was 'overanxious' and when he started school the school nurse gave me the same label," she wrote.

Another parent described how he had to "fight tooth and nail" to prove his child had gone deaf after contracting a virus. After 2 years the boy was diagnosed severely deaf.

Ignorance about deafness in schools, and lack of information and help from doctors, teachers and social workers was also cited as a problem by many parents.

... Always a Step Behind, National Deaf Children's Society, 45 Hereford Road, London W2 5AM.

## Community Programme "under threat"

Valuable projects of benefit to the community may be under threat, if the Government's proposed changes to the Community Programme go ahead, a consortium of voluntary organisations claimed last month.

The Government intends to restrict eligibility for the under 25s and over 50s and to abandon payment of "the rate for the job" in favour of a "benefit plus premium". To qualify, participants must work full-time.

Launching the campaign "A Better Community Programme" on behalf of the voluntary sector, which employs almost 120,000 people on CP jobs and accounts for 50 per cent of the programme's budget, the consortium said that the changes may cause major short-term disruption to some projects and threaten the existence of others, as well as causing participants to suffer.

In particular, introducing "be-

nfit plus premium" as payment could make the programme much less attractive to sponsors and long-term unemployed people, they claimed. The change suggests that the Government is planning to introduce a requirement that all unemployed people must work for benefit, and it removes the vital incentive of being paid a fair rate for the job, said the consortium. It may also mean that some participants are worse off.

The majority of CP jobs, over 90,000, are in the field of social care, supporting disabled, elderly and young people in the community.

"There's great concern that some very important services may have to be withdrawn," said Peter Little, chairman of the national forum for CP sponsors, and assistant director of the Rathbone Society, which sponsors 1,700 CP places.

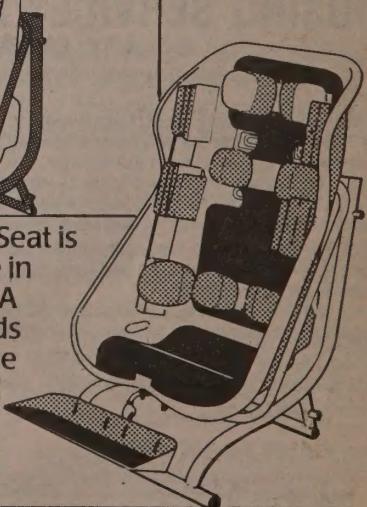
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